



LIBRARY
OF THE
UNIVERSITY
OF ILLINOIS

823
M928d

v. 1

The person charging this material is responsible for its return to the library from which it was withdrawn on or before the **Latest Date** stamped below.

Theft, mutilation, and underlining of books are reasons for disciplinary action and may result in dismissal from the University.

To renew call Telephone Center, 333-8400

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS LIBRARY AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

FEB 23 1981

Presentations for 1893
3 vols

631

44

H. A. B.

With Love from

Mr. 23^d 1888 *L M*

DORINDA.

VOL. I.

NEW AND POPULAR NOVELS

AT ALL THE LIBRARIES

THROUGH THE LONG NIGHT. By Mrs. E. LYNN
LINTON, author of 'Patricia Kemball,' 'Paston Carew,' &c. 3 vols.

THE TRACK OF THE STORM. By DORA RUSSELL,
author of 'Footprints in the Snow,' 'The Broken Seal,' &c. 3 vols.

HUGH ERRINGTON. By GERTRUDE FORDE, author of
'Driven before the Storm,' 'Only a Coral Girl,' &c. 3 vols.

THE DEATH SHIP: A STRANGE STORY. By W. CLARK
RUSSELL, author of 'The Wreck of the Grosvenor,' &c. 3 vols.

THE YOUNGEST MISS GREEN. By F. W. ROBINSON,
author of 'Grandmother's Money,' &c. 3 vols.

HURST & BLACKETT, 13, GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.

DORINDA

BY

THE COUNTESS OF MUNSTER

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON :
HURST AND BLACKETT, LIMITED,
13, GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.

1889.

All Rights Reserved.



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2009 with funding from
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

<http://www.archive.org/details/dorinda01muns>

823

M928d

v. I

MARSHALL

五

卷之四

I DEDICATE THIS BOOK TO

ZARAH,

TO WHOSE KIND AND GENTLE ENCOURAGEMENT

I SHALL OWE ANY SUCCESS

WHICH

MAY ATTEND THIS MY FIRST EFFORT

IN NOVEL WRITING.



DORINDA.

CHAPTER I.

Kindness in women, not their beauteous looks, shall win my love.

SHAKESPEARE.



LOW, oak-panelled apartment, which may be described either as a long room or a short gallery. It is narrow for its length, and one side of it is taken up by tall Gothic windows, set in deep embrasures, furnished by window-seats. Dark wooden rafters intersect one another across the

roof, forming square frames to the carved, and once gilt, crests and monograms which ornament it.

Whatever the apartment may formerly have been, it is evidently a class-room now; for on the wall facing the windows, the panels, which bear marks of having once been graced by portraits, are fitted up with the most modern and commonest of book-shelves; while along and across the room, at right angles to one another, uncompromising deal tables are set, reminding one of pens in a cattle-market. The floor is of polished oak, and rugs and pieces of carpet are spread beneath each table.

It is now about five o'clock p.m., and a cold winter's evening, so the heavy stuff

curtains are drawn close, giving an air of comfort to the room, especially as beneath the high and magnificently carved chimney-piece, which figures at the further end of it, a blazing fire is burning, beside which two ladies sit, with a tea-table cosily drawn between them. These ladies are evidently sisters, for they are dressed exactly alike—in black. They wear their own silky grey hair, parted down the middle, and drawn smoothly back, beneath pretty white caps—real caps, not plates trimmed with lace, but old-fashioned, full-bordered caps, tied beneath the firm round chins. The expression of the ladies' faces is benevolent and motherly, but the younger one seems the shrewder of the two.

The sisters are drinking tea and eating muffins—a pleasant enough occupation, and calculated, one would have thought, to chase away for a while, anxiety and annoyance! But, alas! it is not so to-night! The Misses Woodcock's tea has not to-night been brewed with the waters of comfort! In fact, the two old ladies are 'put out'; and not without reason. So let us draw near, and hear the cause of their evident uneasiness.

'Is Lady Balbirnie coming to-night?' asks Miss Barbara, the younger of the two.

'No,' answers Miss Woodcock; 'she writes that she is starting suddenly for the Continent, in consequence of Lord Balbirnie's ill-health.'

‘And what does she say about Dorinda?’
Miss Barbara anxiously asks.

‘She expresses herself more than satisfied that I have done my best for her daughter, and adds’ (rather touchingly) ‘that “all she can now hope for is—our silence!” I am very sorry for her! But it was my duty to write and tell her all; indeed, I do not see how I could have acted differently.’

‘But, Janetta, do tell me about it! You see, being away all the time, and only returning yesterday night, I know nothing but the bare outline of the story. You ought to have told me your trouble, and I would have returned at once.’

‘Dear Barbara, I could not bear to curtail your short holiday, but it will be

a great relief to tell you about it now ; so listen, while I relate the circumstances as shortly as I can.

‘ About a fortnight ago (on the third of the month), the money for the household expenses, as you know, became due ; so in the evening, after dinner, I retired to my sitting-room, and wrote the usual cheque. I had, however, hardly signed my name, before I was suddenly called away by one of the girls, who told me that the little maid Sarah had fallen downstairs, injuring herself seriously. I hurriedly locked up my cheque-book, put the newly-written cheque into an envelope, placed it between the leaves of the blotting-book, and left the room. I must have remained absent for about an

hour (helping to undress Sarah, putting her to bed, &c.), and when I returned, after writing to the doctor, desiring his attendance, I for the first time remembered the cheque! I looked for it in the writing-book—not there! I opened every box and drawer; I emptied the waste-paper basket—no use! the cheque was nowhere to be found. I was much disturbed, and not the least unpleasant part of it was that, not having made up my mind as to whom (in your absence), I had better entrust the cashing of so large a cheque, I had made it out “to Self or Bearer,” so that any unprincipled person could obtain the money.’

‘Poor Janetta!’

‘While I was still sitting disconsolately

at my writing-table, Dorinda suddenly appeared (you know the way she has of doing so, no one knows how or whence), and she asked me kindly “why I looked so flurried—was Sarah very ill?” I told her at once of my loss, and she seemed really sorry, offering to aid me in the search, &c. She also volunteered the statement that soon after I had been called to Sarah, she (Dorinda) had come into my sitting-room to fetch a book, and found Mary the housemaid there, making up the fire and tidying the room; that as Mary was passing the writing-table, her gown accidentally brushed the blotting-book and its contents on to the floor, scattering all the papers in it, some of which fluttered into the waste-paper

basket. Mary picked up and replaced the blotting-book, but threw some of the papers into the fire. Dorinda said she advised her at the time to destroy nothing, but as the girl answered rather pertly that "she knew her own business," she did not like to say any more.

' On hearing Dorinda's account I sent for Mary, and questioned her. She contradicted part of Dorinda's statement, declaring that that young lady was already in the sitting-room when she entered it. "It was true," she said, "that the writing-book was thrown down, but not by her," for, as she opened the door to enter the room, Dorinda was standing at the writing-table, and she either dropped the book or knocked it over, she was not sure which.

‘ Mary confessed to having burnt a few pieces of paper, and amongst others a pink envelope, which was, she declared, already in the waste-paper basket, so torn and crushed as to be unusable.

‘ After hearing Mary’s account, I felt sure the cheque had been destroyed ; for I remembered, as she was speaking, that the envelope in which I had placed it was pink, and the only one I possessed of that colour.

‘ I had not time to unravel the discrepancies between the two girls’ statements, for a few minutes afterwards I was again called to Sarah’s bed-side, she being in a high fever and delirious ; and for ten days the poor girl lay betwixt life and death ; and what with sending for her

relations, and nursing her night and day, the cheque went completely from my memory, more especially as I felt convinced it had been burnt in the pink envelope, so I foolishly neglected to warn Mr. Lucas at the bank of my loss, as I should have done.

‘ But now comes the painful part of my story. One day last week Mr. Lucas called, begging to see me privately, and, to my surprise, bringing his head-clerk, Mr. Hay, with him. Upon seeing me, Mr. Lucas produced a paper from his pocket, and spreading it before me, asked “ whether I recognised it.” Barbara! It was the cheque! The old gentleman then proceeded to cover it with his hand, requesting me to mention its date. I answered

without hesitation that “it was the third instant, for it was the same date as Sarah’s accident.” Upon this Mr. Lucas turned to Mr. Hay, and desired him to relate his own story, which was as follows :





CHAPTER II.

Justice ! Find the girl !

SHAKESPEARE.

IN the thirteenth instant, a young woman in deep mourning, and with a crape veil over her face, came into the bank, and, handing Mr. Hay a cheque, stated in broken English that she was a friend of Miss Woodcock's, and had come, at her desire (in consequence of Miss Barbara's absence), to get it cashed. Mr. Hay re-

cognized my signature, but fancied the date had been tampered with ; so, with much presence of mind, he begged the lady to sit down while he “ fetched the money,” but in reality while he took the cheque in to the manager to be inspected. Mr. Lucas’ opinion so entirely coincided with Mr. Hay’s (it being evident to them both that the date had been altered from the third to the thirteenth) that he expressed a wish for an interview with the mourning lady before entrusting her with the money. Mr. Hay accordingly went to summon her into his chief’s presence, but to his surprise the bird had flown, and on questioning one of the junior clerks, he said that the lady had waited patiently for some minutes after presenting the cheque,

but that then she became apparently uneasy, and, coming forward, begged that the money might be brought at once, as she was in a hurry. She was told that for some reason the cheque had been taken in to be inspected by the manager, at which she looked annoyed, became rather agitated, but, recovering herself, said she had "to go to a shop a few doors off, and would return for the money;" but she never did so!

'Then she never obtained the money after all, Janetta?'

'No! She evidently got alarmed—and decamped! I asked Mr. Hay whether he could identify the foreign lady, and he said he thought he could, for she took off her glove to open her *porte-monnaie*, and

he noticed a curious mole upon her wrist—in the shape of a star !

‘Good heavens, Janetta ! That wretched Dorinda ! how dreadful !’

‘Well ! but listen to the sequel. As Mr. Hay was speaking, some of the young ladies crossed the lawn, and he started, and, pointing to Dorinda, said, “That young lady walks so like the foreign lady—a sort of queenly walk—that I could almost swear it was she !” Upon hearing these words, Mr. Lucas looked hard at me, and, seeing my agitation, said, drily, to his clerk : “Ah ! fortunately ‘almost ’ does not count ; but now that you have told your story so well, Mr. Hay, pray don’t spoil it by such ridiculous suggestions ; and ” (added the old man) “I daresay Miss

Woodcock will detain you no longer, for she and I can consult over what steps (if any) should be taken to discover the delinquent."

'The young man, who seemed an innocent, shy individual, accepted the hint and bowed himself out; and, as soon as Mr. Lucas and I were alone, I thanked him warmly for his reticence before his clerk, and implored him to advise me what to do—how to screen the wretched girl! I confided to him how I had taken her into my school without any recommendations, except her mother's, and that she had often proved herself false—untrustworthy; but that she should be capable of anything criminal was a fearful revelation.

'Curiously enough, Barbara, it never

seemed to enter my mind or Mr. Lucas's to doubt her guilt. I was much overcome while pleading for Mr. Lucas' advice and leniency, and so was he, poor old man!—thinking, no doubt, of his own daughter, who is just Dorinda's age,—and he comforted me by saying that as Dorinda had not obtained the money, and that the story was only known to himself and his clerk, he thought it could be hushed up; but he insisted upon seeing Dorinda in my presence, to put forcibly before her the risk she had run. So I sent for her, and, in order to give her a salutary shock, directly she appeared, I introduced her to “the manager of the bank, come to see Miss Stratton upon some unpleasant business.”’

‘And how did she look, Janetta?’

‘I thought she changed colour momentarily, but she bowed to Mr. Lucas with great dignity, putting on an air of haughty surprise.

‘I was too distressed to speak, but Mr. Lucas began, by asking her “how old she was?”

‘She calmly begged to know “what right he had to ask?”

‘He answered kindly that she “seemed so very young for the accusation he was about to bring forward; and having a dear daughter of his own—about the same age——”

‘Dorinda stopped him, by saying that “she could not see, because he had a dear young daughter of his own that

had got into some scrape, why he should think that all young girls of his dear young daughter's age should do the same!"

'Mr. Lucas hereupon turned very red, and answered, with some heat, "that he had never said his daughter had got into a scrape, but that he had only compared her with Miss Stratton as to age—not as to scrapes!" Then seeing, I suppose, that he had no milk-and-water young lady to deal with, he deemed it prudent to drop argument and recrimination, and proceeded to place before Dorinda the facts concerning the cheque, and dwelt strongly on the circumstantial evidence against her.'

'Well, and what did she say?'

'She boldly denied everything, treating

the accusation with bitter irony and contempt, and even hinted that some member of the school had endeavoured to personate her at the bank! Seeing, however, that her denial failed to convince Mr. Lucas, she became excited, and rather theatrically raised her hand to register an oath of innocence. As she did so, the fatal blemish upon her wrist became so visible,—thus dumbly but incontrovertibly giving the lie to her solemn asseverations,—that the world-wise old banker was again seized by a mighty fatherly pity for the reckless girl,—so young,—so imperfect as yet in the lesson of deceit, and “so eager to be undone”! So, placing his hand upon her shoulder, he said sternly, but with much emotion,—at the

same time touching the tell-tale mark upon her wrist—"Girl! for the love of God, flee the path you have entered upon! There is yet time. Remember the merciful words of Him who said to an erring woman, 'Go, and sin no more.'"

'As he said these words, I fancied they struck some hidden chord in the depths of Dorinda's being; for she turned scarlet, then deadly white, and silently covered her face with her hands; and Mr. Lucas, seeing her humbled attitude, and hoping that, in her softened mood, she might be induced to confess, when alone with me, left the room.

'I waited for a few minutes before disturbing her; but, as she remained motionless, I approached her, and speaking very

gently, urged her affectionately to make a friend of me,—to confess her fault, adding that, if she had been tempted by any money difficulties or petty debts, I would try to relieve her.

‘She seemed still weeping, I thought—keeping her face covered by her hands; and when I would have put mine kindly upon her bowed head, she suddenly shook it off, with the gesture of a savage lioness,—the violence of the movement scattering her thick, brown-gold hair all over her shoulders, and sending the comb flying at my feet!’

‘Lor, sister!’

‘—And, with the most ferocious expression in her eyes, she rose—came close up to me, and, snapping her fingers within

an inch of my nose, exclaimed, "That!" (snap!) "for the manager and his 'circumstantial evidence!' That!" (snap again!) "for his dear, young, *scrapey* daughter! and that!" (snap! snap!) "for the beastly cheque! Oh! it is considerate of you, Miss Janetta!" she said, ironically, "to say you will hush everything up for *my* sake! Hush *what* up? I should like to know! What have you proved against me? What about your pretty, larky little maids and their latch-keys? and" (mysteriously) "about *the other stories?* By all means hush *them* up!—But, mind, it will be for yours and the school's sake, not for mine! not for mine!"

'How insolent! But did not you ask her what she meant?'

‘No—I really did not dare, she looked so savage. Then she reminded me that during the last week my gold thimble had disappeared. I interrupted her by saying “it was found ;” she asked “where and by whom ?” I answered, “In your work-bag, Dorinda, by Mary ; it fell out while she was dusting it.”

‘Barbara, she actually laughed and said, “Of course Mary found it, as she had put it there.” Then, with an accent of great contempt, she asked, “Was I not shrewd enough to see that there was a party in the house bent upon injuring her?—for did I think (had she stolen anything) she would have been fool enough to put it into an open bag ? No, no,” she pursued, laughing, “the stories of the thimble and

the cheque were trumped up to injure her." She assured me all in the house were jealous of her. "Not you, Miss Janetta," she was pleased to say, "for you and your sisters are past being jealous of anything young; but I mean the girls, and probably, amongst them, the *scrapey* Lucas girl." She added she had long known there was a thief in the house, and if they flattered themselves she was going to be their scapegoat without a struggle,—well, they were mistaken.

'She spoke so volubly that I could do naught but stand and listen; but, as soon as I could get a word in edgeways, I warned her of the danger of accusing servants (as she had done by suggesting that Mary had taken the thimble and put

it in her bag); for, as their bread depended upon their characters, they would not stand suspicions being cast upon them.'

'Did you tell her you had communicated with her mother, Janetta?'

'Yes, I told her yesterday that her mother knew the whole story of the cheque, that I had hidden nothing, and that "from Lady Balbirnie's answer she did not seem to insist on her daughter's innocence." But this had not the least effect upon Dorinda; she only sneered and said, "So like Lady Balbirnie! so like one's affectionate family!" Oh! Barbara, I am so glad she goes away to the Abbey to-morrow!'

'Yes—what a good thing, and what a mercy that it is the end of the term, so

there will be no necessity for the exposure of sending her away !’

‘ Oh !’ answered poor Janetta, ‘ I should never have dared do that, anyhow ; for she has such a clever, such a wicked tongue ! and she is always hinting she could injure us somehow.’

‘ Ah !’ said Barbara, nodding her head sagely, ‘ I always said we were foolish to receive Dorinda without first finding out why she left Miss Smith in such a hurry. I am sure it was for something bad ; and it was sheer nonsense to believe what Lady Balbirnie said about Miss Smith disliking to have a Roman Catholic—for Dorinda’s religion would come in nobody’s way. As the arithmetic-master said, “ You might put Miss Stratton’s religion

in your eye, and see none the worse for it!"'

'Maybe, sister,' answered Janetta, rubbing her nose, irritably, 'but it is no good going back to all that.'

'—And,' persisted Barbara, 'she certainly bribed that Jane to let her go out of an evening when we thought she was safe in bed!'

'Well, well,' said Janetta, half-crying, 'we did our best! We made Jane emigrate (paying her passage), and now Dorinda is leaving us; so we can't do more. Besides, Dorinda's threats and inuendoes can't have to do with that story, for it would tell against herself!'

'One never knows,' returned Barbara, moodily. 'She lies so impudently,—turns

the tables so cleverly upon any who assail her; and she has any amount of moral courage.'

'Im—moral, you mean!' returned Janetta; 'anyhow, she will require all her spirit to-night, I am thinking, and she will have plenty of mortifications to encounter; for, though the girls know nothing of the cheque story, they know all about the thimble, and they actually sent me word that if Dorinda was permitted to act in the *tableaux* they would not perform. I had to tell her so, and I offered to manage her departure for the Abbey before the party—if she preferred it; but she flushed up angrily, and said, "She would not sneak out of the house—as if she were really a thief!"'

‘Just like her! How did she get to know the De Brokes, Janetta?’

‘She asked me, some time ago, to get leave for her to play the organ in the Abbey Church, and one day Sir Jasper—who is blind, and passionately fond of music,—was passing, and heard her practising; so he entered the church, accompanied by his sister, and was charmed at her talent (she does play beautifully), and when she ceased playing, he introduced himself. He came several times after that to the church, and finally asked her to the Abbey, saying he had known her parents years ago.’

‘Well, I am delighted she is going. Have you ordered her conveyance for to-morrow morning?’

‘No, I offered to do so, but she answered coldly that she “had made her own arrangements, and that I need not trouble myself about it at all, as Lady Balbirnie had settled everything with Sir Jasper and his sister, Miss Henrietta Maria de Broke.”’

‘So much the better. Does the Duchess of Cheviotdale come to-night?’

‘No, but Lady Margaret Saville does, (with her old governess), and after the holidays she will come to us for a term or two.’

At this moment a maid-servant tripped into the room, saying the men had come to clear the gallery for dancing; so the old ladies hurried off to dress.



CHAPTER III.

'A gray House, sitting by the sea ;
Grayer—older—than you or me !'



BEFORE continuing our story,
we must look a little into the
interieur of the Misses Wood-
cock's home and history.

The family consisted of three sisters, Janetta, Barbara, and Lucinda. The two first-mentioned ladies' ages ranged from between forty-five to fifty, while Lucinda was much younger, being about thirty-five.

Some years ago, the eldest Miss Woodcock, chancing to be on a visit to a friend in the neighbourhood, was so charmed by By-the-Sea and its surroundings, that she purchased the pleasant residence called 'Nun's Court,' and soon afterwards, with the aid of her sisters, opened an establishment for young ladies of good family.

Nun's Court was an ancient, many-gabled, gray stone building, forming three sides of a square, built round a courtyard, (which had been turfed, and turned into a croquet-ground), and situated on the outskirts of the before-mentioned primitive and picturesque little sea-side town of By-the-Sea. The house stood facing, but some hundred yards removed from, the Glittersea Road, and attached to it, at the

back, was an old-fashioned garden (which was square, and surrounded by a high wall) and two or three fields.

Nun's Court had at one time been inhabited by much grander folk than its present owners, and the building always reminded one of some solitary scion of an aristocratic but broken-down family, whose riches and glamour have long since passed away, but whose dignity remains.

At one time the small town of By-the-Sea boasted of but one street, in which all its shops were located; but *en revanche* it possessed an *unique* inn and posting-house called the 'Blue Pig,' of which it was justly proud, for it had been honoured by several visits from the Archæological Society.

Several new buildings, however, had sprung up since the Misses Woodcock's advent, notably, a bank, a town hall, a bathing establishment, and a hair-dresser's shop, kept by a Frenchman of the name of Laménotte, an individual who spoke English perfectly, was a naturalised Englishman, and who not only cut and curled the heads and shaved the faces of the By-the-Sea inhabitants, but also managed their postal arrangements. He was a great favourite, being a chatty little man, with insinuating manners, twinkling eyes, and a jet-black beard and moustache. He had a marvellous talent for never being out of the way when wanted, and no one knew how he managed it, for his time must of necessity have been much spent between

By-the-Sea and Glittersea, as he kept another and a far grander shop at the latter-mentioned place than at By-the-Sea.

Glittersea was a vulgar, flashy, monied sea-side town, a few miles distant, to which By-the-Sea always gave one the impression of being a fairer, and less worldly sister.

By-the-Sea's principal street (aptly called Hill Street) was built on a steep incline, leading to a pretty, yellow-furze-fringed common, beyond which rose the woods belonging to Sir Jasper de Broke's residence, Broke Abbey; while the ancient ivy-crowned church, called the Abbey Church (to which the aborigines repaired on Sundays), was, with its picturesque

parsonage, situated at the extreme edge of the common, and just outside the Broke Abbey Park fence. But *revenons à nos Woodcocks*.

The Misses Woodcock were thoroughly kind-hearted, common-place women, with not the faintest idea of the management of young girls, especially should any difficult characters present themselves. Their one idea was to daub their pupils indiscriminately and all over with a whitewash which they designated 'education,' the same quality and quantity being used for each young lady of whatever capacity.

The youngest sister, Lucinda, whose tender nature bordered upon imbecility (tempered at times, and at unexpected moments, by the cunning of an idiot),

administered the first coating, consisting of a judicious mixture of the Psalms and Mangnall's Questions, moistened by tears.

Barbara (the second and most worldly-wise of the sisters) gave the next, and it consisted in an aggravated repetition of the before-mentioned ingredients and treatment, but with some additions, such as a preparation on Tuesdays in English-French by Miss Barbara for the French mistress, whose French-English was impossible to understand when she came on the Thursday; and other studies equally exhaustive and exhausting.

Finally, Miss Janetta, taking for granted that the work was all right underneath, varnished the whole by imparting what she called, 'The graces of aristocratic life,'

the pupil being taught to 'enter' and 'leave the apartment' as unnaturally as possible; to express pleasingly sentiments which were not felt, and to suppress those that were; to be presented to Her Gracious Majesty in great dignity—and a tablecloth; to paint roses and jessamine on 'bazaar articles'; to *crocheter* 'mats;' and, finally, to sit the rest of the day *bien gantée*, reading Thomson's 'Seasons.' All very innocent and proper occupations, no doubt, but liable at times to drive a high-spirited girl to the verge of madness—or mischief.

(Our readers will kindly bear in mind that this story is of many years ago; the present ideas concerning girls' schools and feminine occupations are no longer the

same; they have become more decided, in fact, more manly in their tone.)

To do the Misses Woodcock justice, they conscientiously performed their duty according to their lights, and became heartily attached to the girls under their charge, who, on their side, seemed to appreciate the affection of their simple-minded instructresses, and generally, with few exceptions, turned out well.

For the last fortnight previous to the conversation recorded between Janetta and Barbara in the class-room, the excitement at Nun's Court had been great; for the Misses Woodcock had announced their intention of breaking up their establishment, and retiring into private life; as they could now command a handsome,

well-earned competency. And they would have carried out their intention, had not their kindest and most useful patroness, the Duchess of Cheviotdale, requested them, as a personal favour, to continue on their establishment for two more terms, so that they might give the finishing touch to her niece, Lady Margaret Saville, a charming and beautiful girl, who was motherless, and just budding into womanhood.

The three sisters agreed to this request, feeling they owed their success almost entirely to the duchess; but, as many of their pupils had decided to leave that term, they thought it as good an opportunity as any for a grand Farewell Entertainment, and they desired the pupils to

decide amongst themselves what form it should take, intimating that they wished no expense spared to make it worthy the occasion.

Two or three of the leading spirits of the school thereupon proposed *tableaux-vivants*, to be followed by a ball and supper, to all of which the complaisant Woodcocks joyfully assented, giving liberal orders that any necessary costumes, &c., should be provided from Glittersea, and that Monsieur Auguste Laménotte should attend, to curl, powder, paint, and bewig the fair performers, and generally superintend the *tableaux*.

The long-looked-for day had come at last, and the whole of Nun's Court was in a pleasurable commotion. No room was

available for meals, or indeed for anything, except the long class-room, which could be cleared in a few minutes for dancing. The coiffeur had arrived, laden with boxes and parcels, and Miss Lucinda had been selected to do propriety in the 'green-room' (as her sisters had agreed she would be worse than useless in making arrangements for the reception of the guests); and a miserable time the poor lady had of it in that mystic chamber, getting into everybody's way, being snubbed by the young ladies, and anathematized by the coiffeur,—whose one object was, of course, to get rid of her, and who, discovering that all her knowledge of the French language consisted in ready-made phrases culled from the '*Petite Grammaire*,'

amused himself by talking volubly to her in that tongue (to the pupils' immense delectation), and apostrophizing her as his *belle bécasse*, or his *vieille bécasse*, as the fancy took him, and according to the amount of aggravation which he was experiencing towards her at the moment. At last the poor lady, suspecting that the Frenchman's gestures of respect and admiration were too exaggerated to be entirely genuine, took refuge behind a curtain, and would have been totally forgotten by her cowardly tormenters, had not a smothered exclamation of 'Lor!' (her favourite ejaculation) every now and then betrayed her presence.



CHAPTER IV.

‘Soft strains of music, wild and sweet, are floating through the carved hall,
Which glitters with a thousand lights, while flowers deck the wall;
The dames in hoops and farthingales, with powder, patch, and jewel bright,
Tread minuets with gallants—all in gold and velvet dight.’



THE company had now arrived, and had been seated as consistently with their rank as could be managed, although there had been some difficulties here to contend with; for the Smiths, Joneses, and Robinsons *would* come early, and got the best

seats, and the Ladies Almeria and Belinda *would* come late, and got the worst ones ; but Miss Barbara's worldly tact, and Miss Janetta's geniality, had smoothed the ruffled feathers, and everyone now looked contented,—and eager for the curtain to rise.

Suddenly the green-room door was cautiously opened, and Lucinda issued thence, her usually placid (not to say vacant) countenance indicative of disaster. Curiosity and forebodings of ill at once seized the audience, and the hubbub of conversation—which had gradually become deafening—ceased in a moment.

One stentorian voice alone—whose pedantic owner was standing, with studied cynicism, with his back to the prospec-

tive amusements, being consequently unaware of Lucinda's disquieting advent, and totally unprepared for the sudden lull—bawled out, with a condescending complacency (born of a patronizing amiability, prepared to condone everything):

‘Yers! yers! very *wor*-thy women—all three! Good women of their sort—very! But their name’s against them—pore things! Woodcock! Ho! ho! yers, yers!’ (The individual’s own name was Boggs.)

Some acquaintance having mercifully pinched the offender into silence, he turned round, and at once, we are rejoiced to say, felt that he had made a fool of himself, and committed a *gaucherie*.

Although Lucinda, as she entered, was

the observed of all observers—with the ‘gimlet eye’ (Dickens) of a multitude of wide-awake beings fixed anxiously upon her, as it never had been before, and probably never would be again—she took it into her empty little head that it would look girlishly innocent and *piquante*-ly graceful, should she approach the assembled company upon tip-toe, as though the room were occupied by a sleeping baby; while, with some mincing little gestures, and her finger on her lip, she beckoned to Janetta, and whispered to that perturbed lady:

‘Lor, sister! Monsieur Auguste says some one must play an appropriate air for each *tableau* on the pianoforte! But who is to play? I can’t; and I know

neither you nor Barbara can. What *is* to be done? He positively refuses to begin without music!’

Dorinda, who was sitting unnoticed in a dark corner by the door, laughed at hearing the hurried consultation that ensued; for she and Monsieur Laménotte had pre-arranged the embarrassment.

‘I really don’t know who to ask,’ said the perplexed Janetta, looking piteously around. ‘Where is Barbara?’

But Barbara was deep in supper mysteries, and in all the despair of hot soup which *would* get cold, and of ices which *would* get hot, and was not to be seen. So, after enjoying her instructress’s discomfiture for a few minutes, Dorinda came forward, and said, calmly,

‘ I will play, if you like, Miss Janetta.’

‘ You !’ exclaimed Janetta.

‘ Lor !’ said Lucinda.

Miss Janetta was irresolute—annoyed ; for the dilemma was great, and the need immediate. Dorinda, she knew, was a perfect musician ; but, on the other hand, the feeling against her among the pupils was so great that she feared the effect of accepting the tempting offer.

‘ What shall I do ?’ reiterated poor Janetta. ‘ Do you think,’ whispering to Lucinda, ‘ that the girls will act if Dorinda plays ?’

‘ Lor, sister,’ said Lucinda, her cunning rising to the occasion, ‘ they needn’t know ; for, although the company can see who plays, the performers can’t.’

This decided Janetta.

‘Put the pianoforte close into the side, round the corner, it runs easily on casters—so ; and now, Miss Stratton ’ (turning to that damsel), ‘if you *will* be so kind.’

Dorinda would have given empires to refuse, and, as she elegantly termed it, ‘leave old Janetta in a hole ;’ but for her own reasons she could not do so ; therefore, coldly bowing, she took her place at the instrument and began to play.

She was glad thus to check the dreaded remarks, and inevitable questionings which she had foreseen must arise amongst the guests, as to why she was the only useless member of the community ; so she had manœuvred with Monsieur Auguste (who was by no means a new acquaintance of

hers, and who since her residence at Nun's Court, had had one or two private transactions with the young lady, in the way of aiding her correspondence, &c.) to avert the danger. The Frenchman, who, of course, was not possessed of the astute damsel's complete confidence, was shrewd enough to perceive there must be some reason for '*mademoiselle's*' excessive eagerness to take part in the evening's performance; but he deemed it wise to ask no questions, for, besides not being displeased at placing so lovely a lady under obligation to himself, he knew his '*monde.*'

All was now ready, and at a given signal Dorinda struck up the National Anthem, playing with such spirit that it

electrified the audience, bringing them to their feet, and eliciting a hearty cheer for the Gracious Lady of the realm; then, after a brilliant prelude, the curtain rose.

The story of the Sleeping Beauty was illustrated in six *tableaux*, and with each scene Dorinda's thrillingly descriptive music entranced her hearers. In the first, the infant beauty lay in the cradle, watched over by the queen, her mother; and here Dorinda improvised a lullaby of excessive softness, which changed presently into a weird and startling melody, emphasizing the advent of the wicked witch god-mother, who, by some sudden effect of light, magically appeared, leaning over the unconscious Baby.

We will not tire our readers by describ-

ing each *tableau* ; suffice it to say, that a lovely girl enacted the part of Beauty to perfection, and when, in the last scene, the young prince appears on his knee by the couch of the waking princess, Dorinda surpassed herself in the melting strains of an amorous ditty.

At the conclusion the performers were enthusiastically called forward, and then a cheer was raised for the fair pianiste, upon which Dorinda smilingly issued from her obscure corner.

As she did so, the performers were full of impotent rage at the trick of which they considered themselves the victims, and the Woodcock sisters had great trouble to soothe their indignation, and only succeeded by reminding them that necessity,

not choice, had forced her to accept Dorinda's offer, also that the girl was leaving the next day—for good.

The Misses Woodcock were amazed at Dorinda's appearance when she came forward to bow her acknowledgments to the cheering guests, for hitherto they had had neither the time nor the light (the room had been darkened, and the light concentrated on the stage) to remark it. They had always been aware that Dorinda's beauty was of no ordinary kind, for pretty, very pretty, had she ever been in her little well-fitting cotton school-frock, set off by the spotless linen collar and cuffs; but they were not prepared for the change and improvement wrought in her by faultless dressing!

She was clad in some diaphanous material, purely white, and made simply *à la Vierge*, without ornaments, save one—a curious, ancient, green enamel girdle, set with precious stones of all colours. No gloves covered her hands and arms, which were beautiful in the extreme. She was always rather pale, but she was especially so to-night, which made her appear transcendently fair. Her eyes were very large, and of a peculiar, steelly-blue grey, while the lashes and eyebrows were slightly darker than her gold-brown hair, which was thick and very long, and gathered up in a wavy mass at the nape of the neck. She was rather above the middle height, and full of grace and dignity.

With wide-open eyes and gaping mouths the three Woodcocks watched the lovely vision, and, truth to tell, were offended at the sight! They had agreed among themselves to be gracious to Dorinda,—to try, just for that evening, to set her at her ease,—to make her feel her disgrace less—in short, to condescend to her a little; but when they saw her calmness, her air of superiority, they were mortified, non-plussed.

‘It is not *quite* good taste to dress herself out so!’ exclaimed Janetta, anxious to find fault, but scarcely knowing where to begin.

‘And yet,’ answered Barbara, ‘nothing can be simpler, but—where did she get it all from?’

‘Lor!’ said Lucinda.

These simple women knew nothing of Dorinda’s ways and means, nor of the element of *préroyance* in her character; and they would probably have been even more mystified and uneasy, had they known that Monsieur Laménotte had brought among his many *cartons*, one or two specially addressed to Dorinda in a male hand, and that they did not originally come from Glittersea. Years after, Dorinda was known to laugh and say that ‘poor Auguste had been (even before the memorable *tableau*-night) one of her most useful, most willing, and most devoted of slaves.’ Useful he had often been, but unfortunately he became (as she said) devoted also,—and consequently dangerous; for our heroine did not deign

to remember that even hairdressers are flesh and blood, as other men; and she also was unaware that the differences of caste did not appear as hopelessly impassable to a republican French mind, as they then did—(alas! that it should be less so now!)—to the English aristocratic mind; and it is doubtful whether Monsieur Auguste Laménotte would have felt quite as humble, quite as devoted, had he seen the ineffable scorn which curled Dorinda's scarlet lip, as she accepted and bent over the costly bouquet which the coiffeur of Glittersea had ventured to present to her! This sort of useful slaves may be content for awhile to be now petted, now scorned, to suit their employer's ends; but they are apt to get sick, from hope deferred,

—then mutinous,—then dangerous, and to turn up, maybe, at awkward moments for their own.

Dorinda seemed thoroughly to enjoy herself at the ball, but she did not care, she said, for dancing. She ‘liked watching it,’ with a companion; so she sat out many dances, but mingled in very few.

‘Well, I declare!’ exclaimed Janetta, in the course of the evening, ‘if Dorinda has not got hold of Julian de Broke, Sir Jasper’s nephew!’

‘Ay, and his heir too,’ put in the worldly Barbara; ‘how did she get to know him?’

‘I don’t know,’ returned Janetta; ‘did not you introduce him? I left all that part of it to you.’

‘I introduce him!’ grumbled Barbara, crossly. ‘Why, he is a terrible *mauvais sujet*!’

‘I know—I know,’ said Janetta; ‘but I was obliged to ask him, to please Miss de Broke; she asked me to invite him, and, as I wrote his card, I felt like bringing a wolf amongst lambs.’

‘And he does look so beautiful—and when he smiles—well! oh, lor!’ sighed the gentle Lucinda, who, though past the age of innocent-lambhood, was a very silly old sheep, and as liable to be fascinated by the wolf, as any frolicsome lambkin.

Many were the whisperings and surmises of the different mothers and chaperons as they noticed the attentions paid

by the principal *cavalier* in the ball-room to Dorinda Stratton,—attentions which the fair damsel received with calm complacency, as if they were her due; thus exasperating her school-companions so severely, that it was with malicious satisfaction they beheld the young man bid Miss Woodcock farewell, very early in the evening, and depart, without taking any further notice of Dorinda.

After Mr. de Broke's departure, Dorinda noticed that the 'young ladies' treated her with even greater coolness than before, for jealousy was now added to their previous dislike; and, although she held her proud head high, apparently ignorant of the undisguised contempt which was evinced towards her, she felt it keenly, and,

if she *could* have compassed the destruction of the whole school by a word, that word would have been unhesitatingly pronounced by her, even though she (Samson-like) were involved in the ruin of her tormenters! As it was, she simply determined to bring the evening (as far as she personally was concerned) to as speedy a close as she could, without incurring the taunt—which she knew would be ready—‘that, now Mr. de Broke was gone, the attractions of the evening were over for Dorinda Stratton!’

So she waited for the conclusion of one or two dances, then boldly and unconcernedly walked across the room (feeling that all eyes were upon her, which did not in the least discompose her, or mar

the queenliness of her gait), and linking her arm unceremoniously into that of poor Lucinda,—who was standing in everybody's way in the door-way, and who was much too nervous and irresolute to decide for herself whether the distinction thus publicly forced upon her by so 'tabooed' a personage as Dorinda were an honour or the reverse,—whisked her off unresistingly into the supper-room; and after plying the not unwilling spinster with champagne and lobster salad, and freely helping herself to the same, our heroine left her victim upon the sofa in a seemingly comatose state, and re-entered the ball-room. Approaching Miss Janetta, she bid her and her sister good-night (making the excuse that, as

she must leave Nun's Court betimes next morning, she should retire early to rest), and shaking hands cordially with them both, (impossible to express the sisters' relief at her departure !) she disappeared ; but, as she left the room, Lady Margaret Saville, who was sitting near the sisters, overheard Janetta say :

‘There she goes !—as proud as a peacock !’

‘Ay,’ returned Barbara, ‘and as dishonest as a magpie, without its innocence ! I should like to have a private view of her nest. I fancy yours would not be the only gold thimble there,—nor her own the only money !’

‘Oh, hush, Barbara ! people might hear.’

And Lady Margaret did hear, and, what is more, never forgot what she heard ; but we will now take the liberty of following Miss Stratton on her way from the ball-room.





CHAPTER V.

'And she has hair of a golden hue—

Take care !

And what she says it is not true—

Beware, beware !

She is fooling thee !'



GOING upstairs towards the sleeping apartments, Dorinda paused on the first landing,—cast a furtive glance around,—then, pushing aside a window-curtain, seized a soft white shawl which lay concealed beneath it, and, throwing it over her pretty

shoulders, opened a side swing-door, ran lightly down a flight of stone steps, and let herself out into the croquet-ground. Skirting the opposite wing of the house, she opened a gate leading into the flower-garden ; then, stopping for a moment to take breath, swiftly crossed the grass, and, guided by the light of a melancholy lamp burning over the door, entered a green-house, in which were displayed some chairs and couches, (turned out of the house for the ball),—some broken flower-pots, and—a young man.

It was Julian de Broke who greeted her. He was a tall, fine-looking, well-made young fellow, with broad shoulders, long shapely limbs, and a curiously firm tread, which told of a determination (one

fancied) to crush any or all obstacles which might cumber his way. He had that peculiar-coloured hair which his enemies called red, but which in reality was a rich warm auburn, and the crisp curls, tipped with gold, were shorn close to his beautifully-formed head. His eyes were changeful—now hazel, now green as any viper's, and deep-set beneath stern, overhanging brows, which, as well as his eyelashes and the moustache upon his upper lip, were many shades darker than his hair. His expression, as he waited for Dorinda (for, of course, the meeting was not accidental) was lowering, downcast, hard; but the moment she appeared his whole face lit up with the most fervent admiration, and there was no lack of gen-

tleness now, as he drew her towards him and tenderly kissed her hand.

‘How good of you to come, darling!’ he whispered, as, slipping his arm round her, he stooped and pressed his lips to her ivory shoulder, half-disclosed, half-hidden by the shawl she had hastily thrown over her, but which he eagerly unwound, allowing it to fall unheeded to the ground.

‘—And oh, how beautiful you are!’ he exclaimed, gazing at her; ‘and I am so glad the things arrived in time, and were what you wished.—And oh, Dorinda,’ gently pulling her down to a sofa by his side, ‘I really could not talk calmly and coldly to you this evening, as if—as if we were strangers, so I came here and waited.’

‘Yes,’ answered Dorinda, calmly disengaging herself from her lover’s encircling arm, ‘you were foolish, Julian, to run such risks, dancing and talking to no one but me,—that is, if you are anxious to keep our engagement secret. But why—why should it not be declared?’

‘Not yet—not yet, dearest, it would not do; for I have been reckless—extravagant, and I wish—first—to retrieve my character. You see, my Uncle Jasper is noble and good, and if I go away and try to do something useful, and endeavour to pay my debt to him, then he will be inclined to help us,—you and me, Dorinda,—then he will believe my wish to reform. I have a plan, Dorinda, and I asked you to meet me here to explain it to you, and then—

then—when I have told it to you, dearest, I must—say good-bye! for, oh! my love, my sweet one, I have done what I told you I should,—and I go to-morrow.’

Again he took her hand, and would have drawn her towards him, expecting her to experience a shock at the news of his intended departure, (news which he had so dreaded breaking to her!) but she calmly though gently pushed him away, saying,

‘To-morrow—did you say, Julian? And where are you going?’

‘Dorinda, Dorinda!’ exclaimed the young man, in a pained voice, ‘I have told you so often, and yet you never know. The fact is,’ throwing her hand roughly away, and hiding his eyes with

his own, 'you don't care—you don't care!'

'Oh, yes, I do,' answered Dorinda, rather irritably, 'and I am sure I have proved it often enough by meeting you at great risks; but I am not good at geography, and never could learn the difference between Botany Bay, Port Philip, Barbadoes, &c., &c.'

'You have no heart!' said Julian, angrily, 'and you are breaking mine! I know I am a fool to live in a fool's paradise as I do,—and I tell myself so fifty times a day!—but,' (passionately), 'you are my life, my soul, my all, and—but you are laughing! By G—d, Dorinda, I will give you up!'

'Not so,' laughed Dorinda, 'that would

never do now.' Then, more kindly, she added: 'I am not cold, Julian, or heartless, but I am so fearful of being discovered here! You men are so selfish! This meeting is fraught with no danger to you, but it is to me; so be quick and tell me your plan, and what it is you wish me to do. We really must be practical, you know, and I am sure it would be better to declare our engagement.'

Julian shook his head, and, endeavouring to speak calmly, said:

'Now, listen, Dorinda. I have told you a dozen times how recklessly extravagant I have been; well, I spent so much money that I took to gambling, thinking to regain what I had spent; but I lost a large sum instead, and, getting frightened, I

told my uncle (who was very fond of me), and he generously paid my debts, and extracted a promise from me that I would never gamble again ! I broke that promise, Dorinda, and once more my uncle paid my debt, but would not forgive my breaking faith with him ; so he refused to see me or even to let me write to him ; and nothing I could do now would make him trust me ; if, however, I go away and work, he *must* believe in my wish to repair the past. Now, what I want you to do is this : when you go to Broke Abbey, you must, by your sweet looks and gentle words, soften my uncle's never-very-hard heart ; and when he loves you, which he must do, then tell him of our engagement. Tell him,' continued poor Julian, with

ever-increasing eagerness, 'how I love you, and how I long to lead an honourable life for your sweet sake, to be worthy of you—and, indeed, darling for you I would work—slave—die! Tell him my faults are only those that he knows; but that I have never been guilty of the sin he most loathes—faithlessness to a woman; for I have never loved anyone but you, and will be true to you till death,—if he will help me to be so! And, oh! my love,' cried the young man, losing all control over himself at the bitter thought of parting—throwing himself at Dorinda's feet, and burying his face in her lap, 'I *do* love you so! and you love me too—a little—do you not?'

Appealingly he spoke; then, casting his

arms impetuously around her and pressing his cheek to hers, he whispered, passionately,

‘You do love me! You dare not say you don’t! You have proved it to me, and I am not ungrateful.’

‘Well, of course I love you,’ quietly returned Dorinda, turning pale, and firmly pushing her lover from her; ‘but you *are* so excitable, Julian. Do calm yourself, and I promise you I will do my best with Sir Jasper.’

‘Thank you—thank you, dearest, and forgive my agony of love; but I never think you care for me as I do for you; and then I get jealous,—miserably jealous,—and oh, my dear one, don’t laugh at me, but—you will see my brother at

the Abbey—a good, simple fellow, but so handsome, and everybody thinks so much of him, for he will be so rich, and——’

‘Rich!’ repeated Dorinda. ‘Why, you never told me you had a brother!’

‘Did I not? I suppose I was always so occupied with you, and our meetings always seemed so short; but he is my twin, and we are so alike, though he is much better-looking than I, and—you won’t fall in love with him, will you, nor let him——?’

‘Psha! Julian!’ answered Dorinda, impatiently, ‘what nonsense! You know I care only for you; but I can’t quite see why you dread Sir Jasper’s anger so much; for he can’t injure you permanently, as

the place is entailed, I suppose, and you—being the heir——’

‘The heir!’ said Julian, laughing. ‘Oh, darling! for your sake I wish I were! Why, my brother Julian is the heir, and I, your poor lover, am only “Jock, the laird’s brother.” But we are so alike that we are always being mixed up. My poor mother, when she gave birth to twin sons, from a foolish whim, called the elder “Julian Edward,” and the younger, (my humble self,) “Edward Julian,” and to make “confusion worse confounded,” we have both been called “Julian” at home, “Julian the first and Julian the second”; but—ho!’ exclaimed the young man, ‘help! She is fainting! Good God! what is the matter?’

Dorinda did indeed look ghastly.

‘Hush, you fool,’ she said, angrily, ‘that is—I beg your pardon—a sudden faintness—it will pass! I thought I saw some one peering at us through the glass. Oh, Julian—Edward’ (‘or whatever his horrid name is,’ she said *sotte voce*, and grinding her teeth), ‘leave me, for the love of heaven, or—I shall die!’

The girl burst into an agony of tears, and her lover looked at her in amazement, for she violently dashed his arm away as he would have supported her,—then a savage glitter, not good to see, shot from his eyes, and, with a low whistle and a smothered oath, he said:

‘Oh! that’s the secret—is it? At last I see! You thought I was the heir, and

that some day, ere long, I should make you mistress of Broke Abbey; and you have discovered your mistake! Oh! fool! fool! that I should have been so deceived! (*‘He deceived!’* thought Dorinda. *‘I like that! What am I!’*) *‘But hearken, young lady. I am not a man to be put on, taken off, and cast aside—like a pair of gloves! I have loved you with every desire of my soul—every fibre of my body—whatever your feelings for me may have been! For your sake I have relinquished everything a young man holds dear! My quondam pleasures have become a weariness,—my former pursuits, a pain,—because unconnected with you! For your sake I am leaving my native land, working my way out as a pauper,—determined*

to earn a living—perhaps riches and luxury—only to cast them into your lap; and that, because I believed in your love, your disinterested love! But the play is out! The masks (worn innocently by one at least of the actors—myself!) are torn aside, and we now appear in our natural characters! But, Dorinda, remember, that when I love—I love, and when I hate—I hate! And I will see you dead at my feet rather than belonging to another; so beware!’

Dorinda quailed beneath Julian’s gaze; then, mastering herself, she said, in apparent indignation, and with an assumption of great dignity :

‘How unmanly to threaten a woman so, Julian! You know that, rich or poor,

I love you only ! What made me feel faint was, that I fancied (as I told you) I saw some one looking in at us, and it terrified me. Be sure, darling,' she continued, placing her hand caressingly on his shoulder, 'I will do my best with Sir Jasper ; and if you will only go to—wherever it is—and make enough for us to live on, all will be well. Only don't get disheartened, and—don't come home too soon ; and don't terrify me with such wicked threats ! Oh, how cruel you are !'

In an ecstasy of repentant emotion, and of shame at his violence, Julian once more seized her hand, and said, in a broken voice,

'Do you really mean it, Dorinda ? What a brute I have been ! But I thought for

a moment you meant to throw me over, because you found out I was poor; and God knows I have never tried to make you think otherwise!’

He would have said more, but, seeing her glance nervously around, he drew her down on the couch and whispered, hurriedly,

‘I embark to-morrow night,—a sailing vessel,—touches nowhere till we arrive, which we may not do for months. I will write by the pilot as he leaves us. Oh, Dorinda! you have it in your power to plead my cause with Sir Jasper, and your love and truth will make a good man of me. Don’t forsake me. For your sake I go, and I may never return; so, for the last time, lay your head on my shoulder

—so. Now look me straight in the eyes
—so. Now repeat these words after me,
“ Julian, as God lives, I love you, and
will be true !” ’

‘ As God lives, Julian,’ echoed the girl,
‘ I love you, and will be true !’

‘ Then,’ said the young man, solemnly,
and with deep feeling, ‘ *may God deal with
us as we do by one another.*’

For one moment he buried his face in
her bosom ; then, pushing her from him,
he staggered to his feet, opened the glass
door, and passed out into the night.

After his departure Dorinda rose from
the couch and stood as though bewildered,
covering her eyes with her hands ; and
when, some minutes later, she removed
them, a devastating storm seemed to have

passed over her face, depriving it of all womanliness, all softness. Her eyes were hard and pitiless, her mouth compressed, and she looked almost old.

‘Ah! Edward—Julian,’ she whispered, with bitter emphasis on the name, ‘I have been the fool this time! Who will be the next, I wonder? I rarely make blunders, but I have made one this time, and no mistake. Oh!’ (with a bitter wail) ‘what have I not risked and lost! What, *what* shall I do now!’

Slowly, and looking cautiously around, she left the green-house, recrossed the gardens, and entered the house; then, gliding upstairs, undressed and went to bed, but not to sleep; for, hours later, she overheard the girls laughing and talking as they mounted

the stairs (when the ball was over), and, long after they and the whole house were wrapped in silence, she alone remained awake, tossing and turning, and muttering to herself,

‘What, *what* shall I do now!’





CHAPTER VI.

‘She has two eyes, so soft and brown,
 Take care!
 She gives a side-glance, and looks down,
 Beware! beware!
 Trust her not,
 She is fooling thee!’



THE next morning Dorinda rose early, having decided to leave Nun’s Court as soon as possible; and great was the surprise of the whole establishment when, about ten

o'clock, Sir Jasper de Broke's family coach drove to the door, with be-wigged coachmen and two powdered footmen, each of the latter carrying a gold-headed cane. One of these splendid individuals having descended from behind the coach, proceeded to assault the Nun's Court knocker and bell with dignified ferocity, and informed the breathless Rhoda that he and his colleagues had been despatched by Sir Jasper's orders to escort Miss Stratton to the Abbey.

Dorinda, who had been anxiously awaiting the carriage, now tripped downstairs, dressed most becomingly, and beaming with smiles. She bid each gasping Woodcock a condescending farewell, first seizing Miss Janetta's unwill-

ling hand, and saying, in her clear, ringing voice, so that all present might hear:

‘Farewell, Miss Woodcock, I am infinitely obliged for all your kindness; and I regret that latterly a cloud should have risen between us; but I have no doubt that Time and your own good sense will disperse it!’

‘Humph!’ was all Miss Janetta could answer, being completely staggered at Dorinda’s cool assurance and the turn things had taken.

‘Good-bye, dear Miss Barbara,’ our heroine also smilingly said, as she approached that lady; ‘I trust you are none the worse for the *chee-arming* party you gave us last night; and that Miss Lucinda’

(condescendingly patting the latter on her shoulder) 'is not suffering from—the champagne and lobster salad which she seemed so to enjoy!'

'Good-bye, Miss Stratton,' answered the boiling and bubbling Barbara, 'and should you, by chance, in your excessive hurry to decamp, have accidentally (of course!) carried off anything—not your own—no doubt you will honestly return it!'

'Indeed, yes!' retorted Dorinda; 'and should you chance to hear from your pretty and "larky" little maid Jane (who you so obligingly aided to emigrate), perhaps you would kindly send me her address, as she might want my help and advice! She had many enemies, and I

know she had some idea of going to law.
Good-bye !'

In a moment, with the aid of the footman, Dorinda ascended the carriage steps, the door was banged-to, the coachman tickled up the horses, and waving her hand gracefully, our heroine and the whole paraphernalia vanished.

'Just for all the world like Cinderella's pumpkin coach,' said the servants, who from their regions below had witnessed the triumphal departure.

'Insolent monkey !' said Barbara.

'Lor !' ejaculated Lucinda.

In spite of this brilliant wind-up to her school-days, Dorinda felt ill at ease, and her short journey to Broke Abbey was not one of entirely pleasurable antici-

pations. She felt as though she were putting her foot out into the dark ; but as she drove through the magnificent park, and marked the proudly-stepping deer, and the grand old house in front of her, she sighed—an impatient covetous sigh,—and wondered whether she should find Julian Edward as impressionable as Edward Julian !

‘ I will not—will not think of the past !’ she thought, as she drove beneath the gothic archway. ‘ Courage, courage !’ she whispered to herself ; ‘ *Le jeu vaut la chandelle !*’

As she alighted, however, she experienced some nervousness, and on entering the vast hall, with its groined roof, its stained glass windows, (which cast prismatic colours all around,) and the ancient banners which

waved majestically overhead, the place reminded her of a cathedral, and the sacredness of those terrible words, '*May He deal with us, as we do by one another,*' rang in her ears like a curse! Chiding herself, however, for such superstitious folly, as she designated it, she asked the graceful groom of the chambers, as that piece of perfection was picking his way in front of her :

'Can I see Miss de Broke?'

'Ho! yes, mim, suttinly, mim!' answered the enchanting official, 'but Sir Jisper's horders was, that you was to be shown hinto 'im, mim!'

'Very well,' said Dorinda, feeling relieved for she never dreaded the male sex, 'pray do so.'

Her conductor now led her through a long corridor, ornamented on each side by statues, gilt figures supporting lamps, and cabinets full of exquisite china; at the end of which he threw open a door and announced,

‘The *Honourable* Miss Stritton.’

With trepidation, Dorinda entered the room, and was suddenly dazzled by a flood of sunlight, which, pouring through a gothic window of painted glass, seemed to bathe her in the halo of a rainbow.

‘A good omen!’ the girl ejaculated; then looking across the room, which was spacious and lofty, she beheld her host, Sir Jasper de Broke, who had risen from his seat to receive her. Being quite blind, he did not

advance, but stood with his hand courteously stretched out in welcome.

Dorinda hastened towards him, and put her hand in his, remarking, with her usual quickness of observation, that his fingers were long and slender, and that on one of them he wore a curious antique ring, in the form of a crown, set with rubies and diamonds. He was surrounded by flowers, and several large and small dogs lay crouched around. One of these animals snarled so inhospitably as Dorinda approached that she paused, fearful of its attacking her; but it did not move until she placed her hand within that of its master; then its exasperation became ungovernable, and the beast would inevitably have done her some injury had not

Sir Jasper called out authoritatively, 'Runa! Runa!' upon which it sprang under a chair hard by, and continued to growl vindictively, and to display its teeth at intervals during the whole interview.

'Miss Stratton,' said Sir Jasper, in a deep, manly voice, 'welcome! and, in spite of Runa's opposition, you are very welcome!'

'It is very kind of you, Sir Jasper,' answered Dorinda, timidly and sweetly, 'to receive me so cordially.'

'My dear Miss Stratton, you know you are no stranger, for your beautiful music has often spoken to my very heart in our little church; besides, you have been vividly described to me by my nephew; and if you

are half as pretty as your voice and your music are melodious, you must be beautiful indeed !’

Dorinda coloured and laughed musically, (she had a pretty, *enjoué* laugh,) and she thought to herself, ‘ Oh ! I wish he wasn’t blind, or I am sure I should soon make an impression upon him !’

Aloud she said :

‘ I have no doubt your nephew flattered me ; but, Sir Jasper ’ (with much feeling in her voice) ‘ I want you all to love me, and not only to admire me ! and perhaps Runa may get to love me too—in time. Who knows ?’

Sir Jasper now sat down, as did Dorinda, carefully scanning the blind man the while.

He was tall, manly, and dignified, and his dark eyes, when open, (he generally kept them closed,) had a sad and listening expression which was touching in the extreme and very beautiful, and no blemish of any kind was perceivable in them. He wore a pointed beard and a downward trained moustache, which, as well as his hair, were slightly tinged with gray. Altogether he reminded Dorinda irresistibly, both in features and air, of the pictures of Charles I., from whom the De Brokes proudly claimed descent.

‘His teeth are lovely!’ thought our heroine, ‘and all his own! and his mouth and smile are the most touchingly beautiful I ever saw!’

She had an artist’s eye, this young girl,

and was undeniably struck by Sir Jasper's appearance and surroundings.

‘Nobility and loyalty,’ she thought, ‘are stamped upon him personally, and,’ (looking round the room), ‘the casket is worthy of the jewel!’





CHAPTER VII.

Happy thou art not; for what thou hast not, still thou striv'st to get.

SHAKESPEARE.



AFTER a short conversation about her parents, her journey, etc., Dorinda cast her eyes accidentally upon a large mirror opposite, which reflected all the objects behind her, and so became aware that a lady was standing, watching her. She was holding back a heavy portière, which

shrouded a door leading into another room, and, as Dorinda guessed the new comer wished, and believed herself, to be unperceived, she continued conversing unconcernedly with Sir Jasper, and after a pause said distinctly,

‘And when may I see Miss de Broke? My mother said she was once a dear friend of hers, and I long to see one of whom I have heard so much!’

‘We will ring,’ said Sir Jasper, taking up a silver bell; upon which the apparition in the mirror suddenly disappeared (like a duck diving under water) and reappeared with marvellous celerity through a door-way in another part of the room.

‘How do you do, Miss Stratton?’ said

Miss de Broke, 'I am heartily glad to see you !'

Dorinda rose from her chair, when thus accosted, and was vastly astonished at the contrast between the brother and sister. The latter was as loud and vulgar-looking, as the former was gentle and refined.

Miss de Broke's face was very red, very fat, and with such a pronounced and amplified jowl dependant therefrom (presenting innumerable terraces of chins) that her mouth, which was small, red, and quite round, looked like a coral button, placed in the very centre of her face. Her voice was like the gabble of an excited and indignant turkey, and was invariably audible from the dungeon underground, (which was one of the sights of the place,) to the flag-

staff on the principal tower above. Her figure was clumsy and spongey, and she rolled as she walked. To add to her grotesque appearance, she wore a fringe upon her forehead of fair flat curls, like button-hooks of different ages, and when in evening dress (some of her affectionate friends called it her evening *undress*) she much affected white satin, with Vandyked lace, and large loose sleeves looped up with strings of pearls, believing herself a worthy *pendant* to her brother's unstudied Charles-the-First-like appearance ; in fact, a modern Henrietta Maria ! (which names had been given her at baptism.)

Miss de Broke could not open her mouth without betraying that she was purse-proud and 'second rate,' but she

was kind-hearted in the main, and deeply attached to her brother, watching jealously, too jealously, over him, his interests and friendships. She was a great trial to him at times, and since his misfortune (he had become blind several years previously) she had contracted a—to him—most painful habit of addressing him in a sort of affectionate bellow, as if he were deaf, as well as blind; bringing to mind the fallacy current amongst under-bred people, i.e., that they will make themselves better understood by some bewildered, shrinking foreigner, innocent of the English language, if only they shout loud enough! Sir Jasper, like all blind people, was very sensitive to voices, and he often writhed under his sister's, although he loved and respected

her too much to let her even suspect the painful fact.

‘Oh ho!’ thought Dorinda, as Miss de Broke came forward, ‘this lady then is poor Sir Jasper’s family skeleton! A well-covered one, at all events; but not content, (I take it,) to rest quietly in the traditional “cupboard!”’

‘Welcome, dear Miss Stratton,’ reiterated Miss de Broke, as she shook Dorinda’s hand, ‘but may I not call you “Dorinda,” for your mother’s sake? You are very like her, but fairer, slighter, and taller.’

Dorinda gazed intently at her hostess, weighing in her own mind how best to ingratiate herself with her.

‘How shall I manage her?’ she said to herself; ‘she is evidently a commonplace

individual ; but is she romantically commonplace, or matter-of-factly so ? Shall I take her by storm ? or shall I be shy and frightened ? No ! I think I will take her by storm—people of her *physique* are generally impulsive ; so here goes, neck or nothing !’

Then, as if unspeakably touched by some memory, she threw herself into the astonished Henrietta Maria’s arms, and, laying her head upon her ample shoulder, exclaimed, choked by emotion :

‘My mother’s Henrietta Maria ! My mother’s early friend !’ (She felt that ‘old friend’ might be dangerous !) ; then, hurriedly releasing Miss de Broke from her embrace, she said, with a charming mixture of shyness and candour, ‘For-

give me! but you looked so kind—so true, that I forgot I was a stranger to you!’

Miss de Broke laughed, did not look displeased, and said,

‘I did not know that Car Balbirnie remembered our girlish days sufficiently to have impressed you so strongly! Anyhow, I am delighted to welcome her daughter, and to apologise for Runa’s churlish behaviour. How he grows! I never saw him behave so before!’

‘Beast!’ thought Dorinda; but, turning a grateful look upon Miss de Broke, she composed herself to listen attentively to any conversation between the brother and sister, in hopes of discovering some salient points in their characters, by which she

might guide her future behaviour. She had not long to wait, for Henrietta, with all her faults, was very transparent ; (her jealous distrust of her brother's friendships being childishly so) ; indeed, she was curiously open and above-board in thoughts, words, and actions ; rarely thinking more than she said, and never saying more than she thought. Sir Jasper's character our heroine had at once fathomed ; so in a very short space of time she summed up both individuals in a few words thus : ' Don Quixote—and a Beggar on Horseback !'

' I hope,' said Sir Jasper to his sister, ' that Miss Stratton's room is comfortable ?'

' Oh, yes !' returned Henrietta. ' I have given her the tapestry-room, where the

Duchesse d'Hermigny always sleeps. It is a lovely room!' (turning to Dorinda). 'The muslin curtains alone cost fifty guineas the pair' (Sir Jasper winced); 'and the bed was once used by our royal ancestor Charles I., whose monogram, (and that of his queen,) is embroidered all over the counterpane and hangings. The carpet was very difficult to obtain in character with the rest of the room, and cost mints of money!'

'You see, Miss Stratton,' interposed Sir Jasper, hurriedly, 'my sister is proud of doing the martyr king honour in every possible way!'

'Yes,' gabbled on the lady, totally innocent of her brother's growing uneasiness, 'but luckily it is easy to do

so—for with Sir Jasper's e-normous fortune——'

'Dear Henrietta!' exclaimed Sir Jasper, nervously, 'no doubt Miss Stratton is fatigued, and would like to go to her room.'

'True! I will take her at once!'

Dorinda was not prepared for the old-world courtesy with which Sir Jasper, leaning his hand on his sister's shoulder, accompanied his guest up the broad staircase to the door of her bed-room, leaving her there, with a bow full of dignity and courtly grace. She was both flattered and pleased, but Miss de Broke assured her, with due caution, lest the young lady should be too elated,

'You must excuse my brother's ex-

ploded notions as to what is due to a lady-guest! His manners do not march with the times, and ' (with a slight tinge of asperity, not lost upon her hearer) ' had you been a governess he would have treated you the same, only probably with still greater respect !'

Dorinda smiled, and said simply she felt unworthy of so much deference, and then proceeded to examine the apartment, determined to win Miss de Broke's favour as well as her brother's.

A 'lovely room' it undeniably was; hung with tapestry, filled with exquisite antique furniture, and smelling of lavender and pot-pourri; with a cheerful fire burning, composed of large logs of wood placed upon an old-fashioned 'arm-chair' grate,

giving the whole an air of home-like comfort.

‘What a charming room!’ cried our heroine, in ecstasies, ‘and what taste! all yours, Miss de Broke—of course! and how kind of you to put poor little me into one of your state-rooms! I could not be better lodged, even if I were—a queen, or—a governess!’ Then, walking up to the bed: ‘And what pretty pillow-cases, all frills and Valenciennes lace!—the sheets all frilled too, and so fine! *They must have cost a fortune!*’

‘Seven pound ten a pair,’ promptly answered the delighted lady; ‘but then, you see——’

‘Oh, yes,’ deftly cut in our heroine,

‘of course with Sir Jasper’s enormous fortune——’

‘Of course, of course,’ agreed Henrietta, delightedly, ‘besides, we are always having great people staying with us, and we must keep up our position.’ (Henrietta always put a stress upon the first syllable of this word.)

‘Naturally,’ agreed Dorinda, ‘but I am too humble for you to give *me* the use of all these lovely things!’

‘Well! you are so pretty yourself, that it is, after all, only “sweets to the sweet!” Sir Jasper tells me you play the organ delightfully, and we have an organ here—in the music-room; it cost enormously having it put up!’ (‘Of course,’ murmured

Dorinda,) ‘but it is such a pleasure to my poor brother, who plays divinely himself.’

After a little more conversation, Henrietta rolled out of the room, saying,

‘My nephew comes to-day, but no one else. I fear you will find it rather dull!’

Dorinda answered that she never was dull; and directly she was alone, she sat down, and taking a letter out of her pocket, read it carefully twice. It was from her mother, a worldly, cruel, heartless, but useful letter, part of which we will read.



CHAPTER VIII.

‘The deadliest snakes are those which, twin’d ’mongst flowers,
 Blend their bright colouring with the varied blossoms,
 Their fierce eyes glittering like the spangled dew-drops ;
 In all so like what nature has most harmless,
 That sportive innocence, which dreads no danger,
 Is poisoned unawares.’



AFTER a little home business, the
 letter went on :

‘Miss Woodcock’s news was
 a dreadful annoyance to me, although,
 after your abominable folly at Miss

Smith's, nothing surprises me! But mind you, this one is the most serious scrape you have ever got into; and, although you may deny your guilt to others, it is no use your doing so to *me*; and mark my words, that cheque (how could you be such a fool as to leave it in their hands!) will hang over your head all your life; although no doubt the old Woodcocks will keep the ugly secret to themselves (unless they can make more by letting it out!) for the sake of the school. Again, how stupid of you to accuse the servants, and set them against you! You may be sure they will have no mercy upon you if it ever comes out,—for servants are jealous of the monopoly of cheating! Really, what with your father's

drinking, and your follies,' ('She glosses over a few peccadilloes of her own, while enumerating the family characteristics!' sneered Dorinda), 'my life is not worth the living! I must, however, do you the justice of confessing that you are always very clever at wriggling out of any scrapes you get into! Only once for all,—take my advice, and beware of quarrelling with servants! *Je m'y connais! J'ai passé par là!* If the cheque story comes out, you will have to go abroad either as a governess, or a hospital nurse, or a missionary. Your plan of going to Broke Abbey is a good one, and, if you could get in there for good, it would be better still. I used to know Henrietta Maria well—at one time. She is the acme of vulgarity, and,

I am told, watches her brother, like the cat she is (or used to be) ; but she was open to any amount of blarney ! I know nothing of the nephew you mention ; his father died away somewhere—was under a cloud. There were twin sons—at least I think so.’ (‘ Don’t I *know* it !’ snarled Dorinda.) ‘ Why don’t you go in for the heir ? I can’t increase your allowance, but I send you five pounds, which must last some time. I am off to Homburg to try my luck at the tables. I am sending Estelle to you, as you should not be maid-less.

‘ C. BALBIRNIE.’

After reading this precious epistle over twice, Dorinda sat for some minutes in deep thought, then dashing away a tear

she rose with an impatient exclamation, (which did not sound like a blessing), and, burning it with care, began to unpack, communing thus within herself: ‘Yes! I have been a fool—in more ways than she knows; but now, what am I to do? How am I to rid myself from my inconvenient, poverty-stricken lover? Well, if only he keeps to what he said about going away, there is not much difficulty, for he can’t return under the year; and I may compass a good deal in a year! I wonder when I shall get the promised letter which he was to write the moment he started? Once he is off, then I shall be free to try and get—some one else! I never made out, after all, where he is going, and I really don’t care, as long as he goes,

—and stays long enough ! but that he must do, if he thinks to make a fortune fit for me to live on.’ (Here our heroine laughed—but not her musical laugh.) ‘But if,’ she said aloud, almost savagely, ‘he expects me to cut my own throat, by trying to make peace betwixt him and his uncle—well, I’m afraid he will be disappointed ! for what, in Heaven’s name, *should* I do if Sir Jasper were to relent, and give Edward Julien and me’ (grammar was at a discount just at that moment) ‘enough to starve respectably upon ! No, no ! that won’t do for me ! but, *que faire ?* ah well ! I must be prepared for difficulties ; bnt I am not, and never was, faint-hearted ! No doubt something will turn up !’ Again she was silent ; then she

said, half aloud, 'How I wish I hadn't met him so often alone, while the Woodcocks were roosting, (or whatever Woodcocks do when they are tired); for if that were to come out,—but I think I've managed to terrify old Janetta and stop *her* tongue.'

Just then a maid came to the door, stating that luncheon was ready, and would Miss Stratton allow her to unpack for her? Dorinda thanked her, and giving her her keys ran down the oak-stairs, at the bottom of which Miss de Broke appeared, and, kindly pulling her guest's arm through hers, conducted her into the dining-room.

Sir Jasper was there already, sitting in a curiously-carved, high-backed arm-chair called 'the King's chair,' for it was sur-

mounted by a crown at the back, and the family tradition was, that it and another in Sir Jasper's sitting-room, had been always and only used by the ill-starred Charles Stuart.

At a sign from Henrietta, Dorinda seated herself at the table next Sir Jasper, and with much admiration she gazed around the room. The ancient sideboard first attracted her attention, with its wealth of old silver and Venetian glass; and then the dinner-table itself looked so refined, with its beautiful flowers, &c., while innumerable men-servants glided noiselessly hither and thither.

Dorinda was surprised to see that Sir Jasper ate nothing. He sat at the head of the table conversing cheerfully with his

sister and guest, and now and then sipped a glass of wine, and played with some grapes on his plate. When, however, the ladies had finished their meal, the servants withdrew, and Henrietta, rising from her seat, went to a sort of fender in front of the fire, and lifting a covered dish set it before her brother, who began to eat, saying to our heroine :

‘ Dear Miss Stratton ! You see we do not treat you as a stranger ! We do not hide from you the secrets of the prison-house !’

‘ Oh !’ said Dorinda, hurriedly. ‘ Shall I go away ?’

‘ No—by no means, if you do not mind staying ! You see, I—most foolishly—cannot accustom myself to eating before

the servants, although my misfortune is so many years old; and my good sister here always manages for my comfort, herself! Of course, at dinner, I am obliged to eat with the rest, but Henrietta then always prepares my food beforehand.'

'I hope,' said Dorinda, in her gentlest voice (for she felt unaccountably touched at the blind man's dependence upon others), 'that I also may be permitted ere long, and when you know me better, to minister a little to your comfort, Sir Jasper!'

Sir Jasper looked pleased at the girl's words, but his sister seemed rather to scorn the idea of her brother receiving any attentions but hers; and, as soon as

his brief repast was ended, the two ladies adjourned to Miss de Broke's own *sanctum*: and, in the course of half-an-hour, Dorinda had managed, with infinite tact, to learn much concerning the De Broke family generally, and the twin brothers in particular.

‘Julian Edward, the eldest, and the heir, is a good, steady young man,’ said Henrietta, ‘and luckily very unlike his scapegrace brother (the one you know). Sir Jasper liked the naughty one best (he was so impulsive and warm-hearted!) and so did I, but my brother found him false and shifty, and Sir Jasper hates a lie!’

‘Oh—h—h!’ said Dorinda, thoughtfully.

‘Julian Edward,’ continued Henrietta, ‘is truthful, but rough and boorish, and generally dislikes women’s society.’

‘Oh!’ again ejaculated Dorinda, nervously this time, not much pleased at the prospect before her.

‘Sir Jasper,’ Henrietta went on, ‘after losing his sight, would see no one but me for quite two years; then his shyness lessened, and he said he considered it his duty to send for his nephews; so they came, and after a little they got so attached to their uncle that they nearly lived here. (Both their parents are dead.) The brothers (twins) are devoted to each other, and so alike, you could scarcely distinguish them—except in character. Julian the first is honourable, truthful, shy, clumsy, and oh!

so dull! Julian the second is charming! He can sing, play, shoot, hunt, draw—in fact, he can do everything, and everything well; but he was frightfully extravagant, and Sir Jasper, (who had got to love him dearly,) paid his debts over and over again. Then he gambled, and Jasper paid his gambling debts; but he became angry and said he would pay nothing more unless the boy passed his word he would never touch another card! He promised—and broke his word: and when questioned, got frightened, and lied about it! So his uncle, after paying the debt, refused to see him, and would not even allow him to write. But dear Jasper is so kind, and felt so tenderly towards the orphans,—knowing they had been badly brought up,—that he felt it terribly

when he heard a report that the boy was going to emigrate.'

'Where to?' asked Dorinda, quickly.

'I really don't know!' answered Henrietta.

('No more do I,' thought Dorinda.)

'Jasper would have given anything,' continued Henrietta, 'to see the poor scamp before he started, but we did not know where he was, and we never for one moment supposed he would really leave England without making us some sign. Julian the first is of such a curiously-proud stern nature, as well as being shy, that we actually dared not speak to him upon the subject; and a few mornings ago Edward Julian sent for his brother, who was here;

and he started away before we were up, leaving no address,—nor any explanation, beyond a hurriedly pencilled note for Jasper, in which he stated he was gone “to see his brother off.” The fact was he was too proud to ask for any further favours for his brother! It was a terrible blow to Jasper, who loved the boy, and he was miserable, wondering how he got his passage-money, &c. Jasper did not eat for days afterwards! If Julian had only stated from whence his brother was to start, Jasper would, I am sure, have insisted upon seeing him, and perhaps have prevented him going at all. It was a great pity Jasper, in the heat of the moment, forbid the boy writing to him; but Edward

Julian knew his uncle's kind heart so well, he should not have taken the prohibition *au pied de la lettre* !'

Dorinda kept silence, stifling her conscience, and resolutely refusing to listen to those words, which nevertheless seemed to haunt her brain and clog every beat of her false heart :

‘God deal with us, as we do by one another !’

‘I am glad you have come, Dorinda,’ said Henrietta, after a few minutes’ silence, ‘for Jasper is so dull since the poor scamp went, and you will play and sing to him, will you not ? I wonder whether you would do so this afternoon, while I go to my schools ?’

‘I shall be delighted,’ said Dorinda,

heartily, 'and I shall always be glad to be of any use to him, reading, playing, or singing, unless he prefers being left alone!'

'Everything depends upon who the reader or the singer may be!' said Henrietta, smiling; 'but I will leave it to your discretion.'





CHAPTER IX.

The starlike sorrows of immortal eyes.

TENNYSON.



DORINDA now returned to her own room, and at the door she was accosted by a prim old lady with white hair, dressed in a rustling black silk gown. This individual curtseyed deeply to Dorinda, who courteously returned the civility with one of her sweetest smiles, wondering privately

who the lady might be! She was not long left in ignorance.

‘I beg your pardon, madam,’ the old lady said, ‘but I am Mrs. Ashton, Sir Jasper’s housekeeper, and he has desired me to bring you the key of the organ. He thought that, while Miss de Broke was out this afternoon, you might be inclined to play a little.’

‘Oh, ho!’ thought Dorinda, diving, as usual, into people’s unexpressed motives, ‘this is a hint to me that he expects me to amuse myself, and not to bother him with my attentions!’

So she thanked Mrs. Ashton, and asked her to sit down for a moment, feeling that her acquaintance might as well be cultivated.

The old lady, however, declined the honour, begging to be allowed to show Miss Stratton the way to the music-room at once, to which Dorinda assented, and as they sauntered through the rooms, the young lady sought for general information. (As was her wont.)

‘It is a very fine organ, is it not?’ she began.

‘Oh, yes, madam. Sir Jasper had it built himself, and he plays very sweetly, but he generally does so when everyone is either out or gone to bed. He had it placed quite away from the rest of the house, so as to disturb no one. His own private rooms open into the music-room, and with the help of his stick he gets there alone.’

‘Is the organ very large?’ asked our heroine.

‘Yes, madam, very large; and it cost some thousands.’

(Dorinda began to say, ‘Of course—but with Sir Jasper’s e—nor——’ but remembering she was not talking to Miss de Broke, she just pulled up in time).

‘How many stops has it?’ asked the young lady.

‘Stops?’ asked the old one.

‘Yes,’ said Dorinda.

‘Lor! It never stops!’ answered the housekeeper, vaguely, but indignantly suspicious of a slur being cast either on the instrument, or upon the number of available domestics. ‘There’s plenty of servants, ma’am, to blow!’

‘Oh!’ said Dorinda, awkwardly, and inclined to laugh; then she asked: ‘To whom am I to restore the key, after playing?’

‘Sir Jasper wishes you to retain it during your visit, madam; for he has a duplicate key.’

They had now, while talking, arrived at the picture-gallery—a noble apartment, wainscoted in old oak and hung with yellow brocade.

‘A fancy of Sir Jasper’s,’ explained Mrs. Ashton, ‘before he lost his sight; for he always maintained that yellow was the best colour for throwing up pictures.’

The gallery was peopled by innumerable ancestors and ancestresses of the De Broke

family ; some royal, some noble, and all (Dorinda thought) beautiful to look upon. Amongst these portraits was a more modern one of Sir Jasper himself as a boy ; standing, tall and slim, clad in black velvet, a Vandyke-lace collar round his neck, and with his hand resting caressingly upon a huge dog's head. The kingly air, so peculiarly natural to Sir Jasper, was visible in the fair, slight boy, and the large, soft, dark-brown eyes (useless now, alas ! and generally closed) wore the gracious, tender, and withal dignified expression so remarkable in the original—an expression which touched Dorinda curiously, in spite of her cynicism, so much so that, as she passed through the doorway to enter the music-room, she could

not resist turning to gaze again at the boy's face; and the eyes seemed, she thought, to follow her with a mournful look. With a little gasping sob, the outcome of a sentiment as yet tightly coiled up and unsuspected within her breast, she turned away, and was only brought back to her usual self, by the sound of her companion's voice.

‘And now,’ said the old lady, ‘we come to the music-room, and’ (pointing with much awe to the further end of it) ‘within those double doors are Sir Jasper's private apartments,—and here, madam, is the key!’

Dorinda smiled, for she fancied the housekeeper delivered up the key rather reluctantly, as though she were endowing her with some sacred trust!

‘I feel rather like Fatima, Blue-beard’s wife!’ she thought. ‘I wonder whether I shall find a row of ghastly heads grinning at me over the key-board!’

She glanced at the old housekeeper, half inclined to confide the playful conceit to her, but on second thoughts, that personage looked far too dignified, too uncompromising to be trifled with! besides,—calling to mind the old lady’s speech about the organ-stops,—she thought it just possible she might take her suggestion *au grand sérieux*, and accuse her, perhaps, of vilifying Sir Jasper’s reputation! so she simply took the key with thanks, and at once unlocked the instrument to try its tone.

Surmising that her presence was no longer necessary, Mrs. Ashton now left

our heroine, and returned to the apartment sacred to herself and to Mrs. Watts, Miss de Broke's own maid (also an old retainer) to whom she made the oracular statement that 'she didn't know, but she thought it a pity when anyone trusted anything to anybody who nobody knew!' The nods and winks which accompanied these words overwhelmed Mrs. Watts with awe at the speaker's penetration, and with a strong curiosity to hear more; a curiosity, however, which the loyal old lady had not the slightest intention of gratifying.



CHAPTER X.

Silence! beautiful voice,
 Be still! for you only trouble the mind
 With a joy in which I cannot rejoice,
 A glory I shall not find.

TENNYSON.



HE one sincere passion in Dorinda's nature was music. From her earliest youth, she had never unfortunately had reason to believe or trust in anyone or anything; and music had ever been her confidante, her only love.

To be sure, its pursuit never interfered with preferment, on the contrary, it might conduce to it; also it involved no self-sacrifice, or perhaps she might not have loved it as heartily as she undoubtedly did; but we all know the old adage:

‘ If ifs and ans
Were pots and pans
What would poor tinkers do !’

So we will without further ill-natured questionings, accept the fact that Dorinda loved music, and further, that she played the organ beautifully, with both execution and pathos; and oh! the relief it had often been to her after a long and unhappy day of lies and prevarication, to sit quite alone in some empty church, and weave the harmonies, which rolled so

mysteriously around and above her, into fancies !

Fancies—sometimes of rapturous happiness, too ineffable, alas ! to exist,—except in music !—sometimes of terror, too grandly awful to be conceived,—except in music !—sometimes of remorse, repentance, forgiveness, or despair, all—all too sublime to be understood,—except in music !

Good thoughts, evil thoughts, confused aspirations, and—at times (but seldom, alas !)—agonizing prayers would take form amid the mystic clouds of heavenly melody which filled the air as she played.

As her hands wandered to-day over the keys, her thoughts travelled far, far away

into the Regions of Unrest. She sees a bright, glorious Heaven, blue and cloudless at first, but which becomes dark and threatening. Her feet seem to tread amid sweet flowers—but pah! their scent changes to that of dank earth! Then—behold that sea! so calm and lovely, blossom-tinted like an opal,—like an opal, did I say? ay, an unlucky, treacherous stone! for see! its colours fade, the waves become green-gray,—almost black! Agitated they are, foaming, angry, so angry that they toss, cruelly lash, and well-nigh crush a small craft, that lay helpless on their rugged bosom; and relentlessly they bear it away, away,—out of sight, never to return!

‘Oh, bring it back! bring it back!’

wails the music ! ‘ Oh, sea of wild, passionate Life ! sea of black, ungovernable Death !—bring it back, and give it one more chance !’

She stops playing, really and unaffectedly overcome, and, hearing a sound behind her, she turns, and sees Sir Jasper standing in the centre of the room, so pale, so still, that for a moment she wonders whether or not she beholds the spirit of one of the sad portraits of Charles Stuart, of which there are so many in the gallery ; but, recovering her surprise, she rises and goes towards him, feeling instinctively that the blind man must require help.

‘ Oh, pray, pray go on, Miss Stratton,’ he said, guiding himself to a chair, and

sitting down; 'you don't know what such sounds are 'to me! I always loved music, but now,'—covering his poor sightless eyes with his hands—'more than ever.'

'Shall I sing?' returned Dorinda, the same feeling of compassionate admiration filling her generally callous heart, and imparting a tone of tenderness to her voice, like a faint reflection of the music which seemed yet to linger and re-echo through the room. Without waiting for an answer, and seeing that he really wished it, Dorinda returned to the organ and played, and then sang. Her voice was a rich, pure *contralto*, and she sang beautifully; but somehow the spell seemed broken. Now she sang more for effect, and to please

her hearer. Whether Sir Jasper felt the difference she knew not, and she sang song after song, without pausing, except to modulate from one key to the other. She had just begun a fresh song, when the sound of carriage wheels was heard, and directly afterwards Miss de Broke rolled into the room, followed by a young man. Dorinda gave a great start when the latter entered, for for the moment she thought it was her lover; but, upon closer examination, she saw that this man's hair was darker, his eyes larger, his look more straightforward; he had the same characteristically proud, firm tread, and he was certainly gloriously handsome—handsomer than his younger brother.

As soon as she came in, Miss de Broke,

heedless of the music, said loudly to Sir Jasper,

‘Here’s Julian, dear! The coach was passing just as I was entering the Park, so I waited and brought him in; and oh, Jasper! We had such trouble with one of the new horses! (Sir Jasper gave three hundred guineas for him last week, Dorinda!) He got frightened at the man blowing the horn, and he plunged frightfully, turning right round, and looking me in the face! I thought he would have jumped in at the carriage window. So I jumped out,—and tore my lace! Such expensive lace, Dorinda!’

Heaven knows how long Henrietta would have gabbled on about her misfor-

tunes, and how much they had cost her, had not Sir Jasper said :

‘Julian, have you been introduced to Miss Stratton?’

Dorinda bowed and presented her hand. The young man returned the bow, but ignored the hand, which our heroine drew back with some confusion, thinking, ‘I wonder whether his brother has told him anything!’ but on second thoughts she scouted the idea, as she and her lover had mutually agreed to silence upon the subject, not to be broken by either of them, without the knowledge and consent of the other.

Certainly the new young man’s behaviour, Dorinda thought, was unpolished in the

extreme, for after the first stiff bow, he took no further notice of the young lady, and, as they sauntered back to the drawing-room, (Sir Jasper leading the way with his hand upon his constantly-gabbling sister's shoulder,) the new-comer carefully opened all the doors widely for his uncle and aunt to pass, leaving Dorinda in the rear to shut them !

‘ His manners are ursine ! ’ muttered Dorinda ; ‘ *allons ! il faut changer tout cela !* ’ And as soon as the tea was over, (at which meal our heroine wrathfully ‘ creamed ’ and ‘ sugared ’ herself,—the Bear meanwhile standing uselessly by), and having revenged the slights he put upon her by upsetting some tea over Bruin’s boots (his ‘ hind paws,’ she called them to herself) she left the uncle and nephew to themselves, while she

retired to her room and occupied herself in reading and writing letters till dinner-time.





CHAPTER XI.

‘ The sin

That neither God nor man can well forgive,
Hypocrisy.’



ORINDA was the first dressed for dinner, and the first to come downstairs, but she was not long alone, for ‘ Bruin ’ came into the room soon afterwards, upon which our heroine began to read, or pretended to do so, for she watched the young man care-

fully over the top of the book. At first he whistled, and walked aimlessly about; then, approaching the table at which Dorinda sat, he looked sheepishly at her, (being rather astonished at anyone taking so little notice of him,) and took up a piece of delicate white embroidery, which lay upon her work-box.

‘Don’t!’ said Dorinda, looking up for a moment from her book, and speaking as if she were reproving a tiresome child.

‘Why?’ said Julian, surprised, and dropping the work as if it had burnt him.

‘’Cos it’s mine,’ answered the young lady, shortly.

‘Well,’ said Julian, laughing awkwardly, ‘I wouldn’t hurt it.’

‘I’m not so sure,’ answered Dorinda, provokingly.

‘Why?’ again asked Julian.

‘Because boys’ hands are generally grubby,’ Dorinda answered, coolly, ‘and I daresay yours are no exception to the rule.’

‘You are a very rude, disagreeable young woman!’ said Julian, angrily, ‘and young men of three-and-twenty are not generally called “grubby boys.”’

‘Three-and-twenty!’ echoed Dorinda, in apparent surprise; ‘I thought you were much younger,—from your manners. So with you it seems it is not ignorance, but impudence!’

Julian looked aghast.

‘What *do* you mean!’

At this moment Dorinda dropped her book ; instinctively the young man stooped to pick it up, and so did she, and their heads came violently in contact.

‘Oh!’ said Julian, irritably, with anguish depicted in every feature, ‘how you *have* hurt me!’

‘Have I?’ said Dorinda, gently, and with a look of pity in the blue-grey eyes, ‘I am really very sorry ; but you forget, you hurt me too!’ then she added, admiringly, (knowing that people are never so flattered as when one gives them credit for graces they do not possess,) ‘I see that I am wrong, and that your manners are peculiarly fascinating! If you had

not picked up my book, *en preux chevalier*, this accident would not have occurred! I am so sorry I was cross just now, but I was pained—thinking you had taken a dislike to me!’ and, as she said these words, she looked at Julian so appealingly, so reproachfully, that he was taken aback, and, choosing a chair by her side, sat down, saying eagerly, though still shyly,

‘No! no! Why should I? Then—then you don’t think me such a rough brute, after all! but you are,—you know, so——well, I can’t explain, but you make me feel such a clown,—by your side. What do you think about it, eh? Am I one?’

Dorinda laughed, and said,

‘Well! You are *rather* a rough

diamond, I confess !' then, seeing a look of annoyance come over his face, she quickly added, 'but, you know, a diamond is always a gem—always beautiful !'

Julian looked delighted, and, in answer to this subtle flattery, would have said something very much to the point, had not Sir Jasper and his sister entered the room.

'Provoking !' thought our heroine; 'but I haven't lost my time anyhow !'

'Will you take Miss Stratton in to dinner, Julian ?' whispered Miss de Broke, 'and I will follow with my brother.'

Julian willingly gave his arm to the beautiful girl, and she noticed, with infinite satisfaction, that he pressed hers closer to his side than was at all necessary.

The dinner was sumptuous. Gold, silver, and flowers everywhere ; ‘and this,’ sighed Dorinda, ‘is their everyday life—the life that I long for ! ay ! and the life that I *will* have by hook or by crook, and yet, they none of them are perfectly happy. He, poor fellow, is blind, and all his gold can’t make him see ; she is vulgar, and would give all she possesses to be a duchess—or even a countess ; and Bruin,—well,—he is ashamed of himself, and would be far happier in the servants’-hall, with a horn knife and a two-pronged fork ! True ! but the blind man gets comforts, servants, his organ, from his gold ; Henrietta Maria “rides in her coach,” smirks condescendingly at the neighbours, and wears valuable lace, from the gold ; while

Julian Edward will have the sum-total some day : comforts, servants, organ, fawning neighbours, coach, lace—all, all—from the gold ! Oh ! money ! money ! money ! I must have money !

During dinner the conversation turned once and once only upon Dorinda's *quondam* lover, and she listened with all her ears.

‘ I think you knew my younger nephew, Miss Stratton,’ said Sir Jasper.

‘ Yes,’ answered Dorinda, ‘ I met him first when he came with you to the Abbey Church, and—once or twice after that.’

‘ Poor boy !’ sighed Sir Jasper. ‘ If I had known he was going away for so long, I would have seen him before he left ; I parted with him in anger, but he might have

known I am not of an implacable nature!’

There was an awkward pause, and Dorinda seemed to hear her lover’s voice: ‘Tell him I wish to lead a good life—tell him that I love you!’ But she whispered to herself: ‘No such fool!’ and, glancing at the young man by her side, she saw a scowl on his face which made her understand why Miss de Broke had said, ‘they dared not mention the subject of his brother to him;’ for it was the same expression *she* had seen on Edward Julian’s face when she nearly,—oh! so nearly!—betrayed herself in the conservatory, in the Nun’s Court garden.

The subject then dropped, but in the course of the evening Bruin sat down by Dorinda and said:

‘ Did you see much of my brother, Miss Stratton ?’

‘ I saw him several times.’

‘ And what did you think of him ?’

‘ He was very nice and agreeable, and very like you ;’ then after a pause, she added :

‘ He is gone abroad, is he not ?’ and she waited anxiously for the reply.

‘ Yes, he is gone, poor fellow ! I bid him good-bye ; he sails to-night.’

Much relieved, Dorinda again asked :

‘ When shall you hear from him ?’

‘ Oh ! only when they speak with any homeward-bound vessel. The ship herself (*Boreas* by name) touches nowhere. We shan’t hear of her arrival for many months ; and he, poor fellow, will not return

for years ! He expects to make his fortune, my poor brother ! Perhaps I may join him, for we are much attached to each other—real twins ! and we never have a thought apart——’

‘ Indeed ! ’ said Dorinda, faintly.

‘ —And he told me he meant to work hard, as it was *not for himself alone*. When he said this, I felt sure he cared for some fair lady, and I begged him to keep nothing from me.’

‘ Well ? ’ interrupted Dorinda, breathlessly and interrogatively.

‘ How kind of you to be so interested, Miss Stratton ! ’ said Bruin, ‘ but—he would tell me nothing, because he said he had passed his word to “ her ” to be silent ; however, he also promised that if he could

get "her" leave, he would write and tell me everything. Anyhow, such an incentive as love may encourage him on, and make it less hard work. He is a good boy, an odd mixture of weakness and strength, and' (with a sigh the young man said this) 'I am very fond of him; poor fellow! I think that, latterly, Sir Jasper was rather hard upon him; so I won't have the subject broached to me; and I did not wish him to be under any obligations to anyone just now, but to myself.'

Dorinda's heart, or what did duty for one in her pretty breast, was light and buoyant after this conversation. She felt safe for months; and what—what might she not compass in that time! These pleasant thoughts exhilarated her, and she became brilliant, witty, fascinating,

and Miss de Broke looked on with much complacency at the evident admiration with which her nephew regarded the new-comer.

‘He may go farther and fare worse,’ Henrietta thought, ‘for anything so well-born, so fair to look upon, and with such an air of distinction, will do well for the heir’s wife!’





CHAPTER XII.

He was not all unhappy. His resolve
Upbore him, and firm faith . . .

.
Like fountains of sweet water in the sea.

TENNYSON.



AYS, weeks, months had now
passed by happily and quickly
at Broke Abbey, and all the
more quickly from the fact that nothing
especial had happened, to accentuate the
flight of Time. To be sure, Nature's fair

face and form had marked many changes, for instead of her dress being composed of frost and rime, green leaves and bursting buds encircled her, while her faithful *troubadour*, the cuckoo, had just returned, and was already singing her the songs of summer.

Dorinda was still at the Abbey; not only now as a valued and welcome visitor, but little by little, she had become as one of the family. She had made several well-bred efforts to bring her visit to a conclusion, but they had been weak and not very sincere ones, and she had acquiesced very readily to the unanimously expressed desire that she should prolong her visit until her parents' return from abroad.

Meanwhile, Henrietta had developed a great passion of affection for our heroine, an affection which it was quite impossible for Dorinda's cold nature to return, and almost impossible, or at least very difficult, for her to simulate. (By the way, what awkward and painful contingencies are these violent attachments conceived by one woman for another! where '*l'une baise, et l'autre tend la joue!*' For the loved one, if she be of a kindly nature, unlike Dorinda, must either play the hypocrite—which a good woman would loathe—or else wound the tenderest feelings of one to whom she should feel grateful.)

Luckily, Dorinda was only too happy to meet Henrietta half-way in one of

her idioyncrasies; for that warm-hearted lady's daily object, and nightly dream, seemed now to marry her *protégée* to 'the heir;'—as she persistently called Julian Edward, to Sir Jasper's constant irritation. (An irritation felt, but not spoken, and noticed by Dorinda only.) The young man himself was nothing loth, but not being of an inflammable nature, and moreover very shy, he did not care to hurry matters on; and Dorinda fancied, (with a *moue*,) that he considered himself rather too sure of his bird. So he had not yet proposed, but the astute damsel thought that at any moment she could make him do so, and she only hung back because, to her great surprise and no small disappointment, Sir Jasper was evidently disinclined to

further his sister's undissembled wishes upon the subject. Miss de Broke had never spoken clearly to Dorinda herself upon the matter, but her hints had been unmistakable, and she had broached it several times to her brother, whose answer, however, had invariably been, that if Dorinda and Julian really wished it, well and good, but that no one's affections should be forced, and that, therefore, he personally refused to interfere.

‘Why,’ he naturally asked, ‘does not Julian speak to her himself, like a man, if he wishes to marry her?’

‘Oh, Jasper!’ exclaimed Henrietta. ‘You know how shy, how rough he is! But I am sure he wishes it, for he told

me so; and I think Dorinda likes him.'

'Well, well,' said Sir Jasper, rather irritably, 'they must settle it between themselves! I don't understand the young people of the present day.'

Dorinda, meanwhile, seeing there was a hitch, kept her eyes and ears open, and managed cleverly to overhear the above conversation.

'I never saw such a set of slow, cold-blooded simpletons!' she thought; 'always beating about the bush and doing nothing. Heigho! I like a lover with some character,—some passion in him. I wish poor Edward Julian had been the heir! He knew what *he* wanted, and let others know it. (By-the-by, I wonder

why I have not received the promised letter; it is very strange!) Julian Edward is a timorous idiot!’

In spite, however, of these slight drawbacks, Dorinda had the satisfaction of knowing she had made herself indispensable to all the De Broke family. She helped Henrietta patiently with her schools and poor people, and worked for her bazaars; she knitted socks and mittens for Julian,—while he rowed her on the lake; and she wrote letters for Sir Jasper, and would often give up her drive, or any croquet-party, to walk out with, or be of any use to him; and she might now constantly be seen guiding the blind man’s footsteps in the Park, while he lightly rested his

hand upon her girlish shoulder. So the neighbours and poor people alike expected every day to hear the announcement of the betrothal of 'Mr. Julian and the pretty Miss Stratton.'

One day, while Sir Jasper and Dorinda were walking thus together, they met the postman, (a dilapidated old individual, to whom it was pain and grief, in non-official moments, to put one foot before the other, and who, we may suppose, for this reason only, had been elected to fill a post which necessitated his walking an inconceivable number of miles in the shortest space of time).

'I see the postman coming,' said Dorinda.

'Stop him, then,' answered Sir Jasper,

‘and see if he has any letters of importance.’

Dorinda obeyed. There were two or three letters for Sir Jasper, of which, at his request, she read him the postmarks; some for members of his household, and two for herself. One was from her mother, and the other was—from her lover! It was the long-expected letter. Hastily she thrust it into her bosom, where it lay, she thought, feeling like lead; and then, with praiseworthy coolness, opened the maternal epistle, and amused her companion by little extracts of gossip in which it abounded. They now continued their walk, and truly to our poor heroine it appeared a journey without an end, for an agony of

impatience to open her letter devoured her.

At last they returned home, and Dorinda ran hurriedly upstairs into her room, locked the door, and tore open the letter.

‘DEAR ONE,’ (it began),

‘You must have thought me either killed or drowned;’ (‘No such luck,’ muttered the ‘dear one,’) ‘but I did write, darling, as I promised, and gave it to the pilot as he left the ship, so that you should get the very last accounts of me. Many of the passengers did the same; and, as we were all watching the boat being quickly rowed to shore, it suddenly ran foul of another, and cap-

sized, and in a moment the poor pilot and two or three others were in the water, swimming for dear life! We saw the men safely picked up, but they signalled that all letters were lost; so that is why you didn't hear. To-day a home-ward-bound is in sight, and we are all scribbling like so many shorthand writers to "the old folks at home." Oh, Dorinda, don't forget me! ('No fear!' thought she.) 'I am so miserable; but the thought of you comforts me. I will work hard, like a slave, for you; and do, dear, tell Sir Jasper and my brother of our engagement, for, now that I have really started, my uncle will see I am in earnest, and Julian will love you for my sake.' ('I had rather he did so for his

own,' said the reader.) 'And, Dorinda, I did not tell you, before I started, what I meant to do—it might have distressed you—but I will tell you now, as a proof of my love: I am working my way out like a common sailor; for I would not ask my uncle to give me my passage-money, and poor Julian could not afford to do so. But I am very jolly, so don't worry yourself about me. The sailors are all very good fellows, though rough, and it won't last very long. Oh, Dorinda! be true to me, and I shall yet be a good, honourable man.'

Many fond and foolish words were added by the poor boy, but Dorinda felt no softness, no compunction, no sentiment, but one of vindictive resentment against him, who she considered the cause of

her present dilemma,—until she read the postscript, and that filled her with unutterable alarm.

‘ P.S.—Why should I not write myself to Sir Jasper ? It will be more manly, and, as I know you wish our engagement made public, I will write to him by the next ship we speak with ; I hear one or two homeward-bound ships are likely soon to pass within hail. I will open my heart to him, for he is a gentleman and true-hearted. You can tell my bro——’

Here the letter hurriedly finished off, but these last lines terrified Dorinda.

‘ Oh !’ she thought, ‘ if he should write to Sir Jasper, all will be over about my marrying the heir. What shall I do ?’

After a little thought, she whispered to herself,

‘ I know ! this coming letter must be got rid of !’

From henceforth our heroine anxiously watched for the postman’s advent. He came three times a week, early in the morning, and on these mornings she took care to be downstairs before either Henrietta or Bruin, so as to see the letters directly they arrived.

One day the footman brought them in, and giving Dorinda one (from her dress-maker) he placed the others, as usual, upon the sideboard, and after fidgetting about, setting chairs and footstools, &c., at last he left the room, and Dorinda, literally fevered by anxiety lest Henrietta should appear, sprang to the sideboard :

Yes ! there it lay, amid many others ;—

the dreadful—dreadful letter, addressed to Sir Jasper in her lover's handwriting!

Quick as thought, and fancying in her nervousness that she heard approaching footsteps, she seized the obnoxious and terrifying missive, and threw it on the fire, watching it eagerly till it was consumed,—but not quite,—for one shred of paper obstinately refused to burn! It turned, it twisted, it curled, it blistered, but—burn, it would not! and, as Dorinda gazed at it with some agitation, she deciphered upon it the words, ‘As God is true——’ The rebellious atom had now become detached from its smouldering ashes, and, apparently rejoicing in its freedom, like a spirit emancipated from the body, it flew hither and thither, till a tiny

current of air whisked it up into the huge chimney; and, when Dorinda thought it *must* have been destroyed, it reappeared, slowly sinking, down—down, on to the marble slab beneath the old-fashioned dogs, with the words, ‘As God is true!’ ever uppermost!

Dorinda now threw herself on her knees before the fire, seizing the tongs; but the moment they touched the paper away it flew again!—this time foolishly fluttering between two logs of wood,—from beneath which leapt up a sly tongue of flame, consuming the poor scrap,—but not altogether, for ‘God is’ remained intact; and, as these solemn words looked out at the baffled girl, they reminded her curiously and unpleasantly of a certain

‘Writing on the Wall!’ but, with an angry exclamation at her own superstition, she stealthily abstracted her knitting-needle from her pocket, and, with the same caution as though she were watching her opportunity to stab a living enemy, she swiftly and suddenly endeavoured to pierce the offending and hitherto victorious fragment, intending to consign it to the flames. But once more it eluded her, being blown mysteriously quite out of her reach, on to the back of the old chimney’s enormous throat, the words ‘God is’ meanwhile shining out in sharp relief from their sooty surroundings; and there, to Dorinda’s great uneasiness, they remained, long after the meal had begun,—a terror to her, because she, and all like her, know

the 'fear where no fear is.' Oh! Dorinda, no task-master, no slave-driver is half as cruel, half as tormenting, as the terror born of a guilty conscience!

While our heroine was still upon her knees before the fire (striving as many have before her—and as fruitlessly—to exterminate the 'God is') she felt a hand upon her shoulder, and Miss de Broke's gabble-gabble sounded in her ear.

'How now, Dorinda! You look like a Cinderella amongst the ashes! Dear child! surely you are not cold! I only have the fire in the morning (and of evenings sometimes) as it looks cheerful; but remember—it is summer!'

'Oh! I am not cold, Miss de Broke,' answered the girl, slightly taken aback,

‘but—but I had dropped my knitting-needle—so unlucky!—into the fire-place, as I passed, and I was looking for it! but; here it is—!’ and rising laughingly, (but with a furtive glance at the immovable piece of paper, and wondering that Miss de Broke did not at once remark it!) she took her place at the breakfast-table.

In a few minutes Bruin, and lastly Sir Jasper appeared, and the conversation become general. Dorinda’s chair was with its back to the fireplace, and she longed every now and then, but dared not, to look round and see if the writing were still visible.

Dorinda was too upset at the thought of the burnt letter, too anxious about the possible effects of her act, to

eat; so she felt—and looked—ill and unhappy.

Henrietta remarked the pale face and heavy eyes of her *protégée*, and was full of solicitude; and, when Sir Jasper heard that she complained of a headache, he was grieved, and anxious that remedies should be used.

‘This is my opportunity!’ thought Dorinda; ‘for things must come to a crisis, and the sooner the better! With good management I may be married and settled long before the beggar’ (as she styled her first love) ‘knows anything about it, and, when once I am the heir’s wife, they can’t unmarry me; and for their own sakes they will make the best of the bargain!’ After the marriage it will do

Edward Julian no possible good to injure me, and perhaps he will be good-natured, and not betray me! Courage! up and at them!’

These thoughts coursed rapidly through her mind, as she was apparently toying with her teaspoon,—looking delicate and very sad. At last she turned affectionately to Henrietta and said, (her voice trembling with emotion,)

‘Dear, kind Miss de Broke, I cannot any longer hide from you the cause of my sorrow. I have had a letter from my mother, desiring me to return and take her place at home, for my father is too ill to move at present, so I must go to-day, or certainly to-morrow. I am very unhappy!’

She stopped abruptly, as though overcome; then, mastering herself, continued :

‘ You have all been so good to me——’

But she could say no more, and, covering her eyes with her hand, she watched narrowly the effect of her words upon her hearers.

Sir Jasper expressed great regret; but, to her surprise and disappointment, did not press her to stay! Bruin choked himself with his tea,—turned very red,—coughed explosively, and—left the room, apparently in convulsions; but, whether his discomfort arose from physical causes or mental distress, Dorinda was doubtful. Henrietta, with her usual openness, left no one in doubt as to *her* sentiments.

In one moment Niobe was a joke to her! and after embracing Dorinda effusively (dropping tears like hailstones into that damsel's tea, to her infinite disgust) she rolled unsteadily from the room, her emotion causing her to take a slanting direction. 'Like a te-to-tum,' thought Dorinda, 'as it is about to drop;' and so struck was she by the resemblance, that she positively expected to hear the poor lady fall, when outside the door, and roll about on the floor, as a well-regulated, but exhausted te-to-tum would. That catastrophe, however, did not take place, for Miss de Broke was heard noisily moaning as she ascended the stairs, and to slam her door with broken-hearted violence.



CHAPTER XIII.

Vouchsafe to wear this ring !
 Look how this ring encompasseth thy finger,
 Even so thy breast encloseth my poor heart ;
 Wear both of them ; for both of them are thine.

SHAKESPEARE.



AS soon as our heroine was alone with Sir Jasper, she rose, and putting her hand gently on his arm, she said :

‘ Dear Sir Jasper, I can never say one half of what I feel about your kindness to

me, ever since I came under your roof. Indeed, I have not the heart to try; but you will believe in my sorrow at leaving you, and how—how I love you all.'

She waited for an answer, but none came. Chilled and disappointed, she said, after a pause :

'I must leave you now, to make arrangements; besides, I must follow your dear sister, who seems to feel my departure so very deeply.'

She would have taken her hand off his arm, but he put out his, and for a moment detained it; then—said nothing,—and let it go.

'How strange!' thought Dorinda. 'I really thought he cared for me a little,'

and with a nearer approach to pain than she had thought herself capable of, she left the room and going up into Henrietta's *boudoir*, found that lady lying upon the sofa, looking very tumbled, crying hysterically, and blowing her nose sonorously !

Henrietta did not look engaging in grief, for one of her peculiarities was, that when she wept she turned salmon-colour all over ; and as Dorinda stood looking down upon her friend, the pink flush beneath the sandy hair was identical with the complexion of a blonde baby porker, whose acquaintance she had made a few days previously.

At this moment Miss de Broke held a beautiful gold bracelet in her hand, and

as she clasped it upon Dorinda's slender wrist, she gabbled out tearfully :

‘Ta—take it, did—did—dear Dorinda !
It cock—cock—cost, twenty-five pou—
pounds, ‘and’ (with a fresh burst of
grief) ‘I’m so sorry you’re gog—gog—
going !’

Dorinda tried hard to soothe the weeping Henrietta, and partially succeeding, she left her to make necessary arrangements for her impending departure. Upon entering her chamber, she threw herself wearily into a chair, wondering whether her last stroke of diplomacy had in any way furthered her cause.

For quite an hour she remained immersed in thought ; then—there was a startling knock at her door, and Henrietta

burst into the room, embraced her excitedly and said :

‘Sir Jasper wishes to speak with you, dear,—and alone!’ Then she added mysteriously, ‘and Julian will be awaiting you afterwards in the music-room,—and don’t be cruel, dear!’

At these words Dorinda’s heart bounded with joyful expectation, and returning Henrietta’s embrace, she said with well-feigned surprise :

‘Sir Jasper wants to see me! What can he have to say to me! I will go at once!’ and as she ran lightly downstairs she murmured to herself: ‘At last! at last!’

She found Sir Jasper awaiting her in his own private room, sitting in the Royal

chair,—looking, as usual,—dignified and handsome. ‘But—how very pale!’ she thought. Then with the gentle familiarity with which she was now wont to accost him, she put her hand on his arm, and said in her silvery voice :

‘Behold me ! Dorinda Stratton—your servant ! Sir Jasper de Broke, do you wish to see me ?’

‘Ah !’ exclaimed the blind man, feelingly, ‘if I only *could* !’ Then taking her hand off his arm, and drawing her gently towards him, he said seriously :

‘But come and sit by me, Dorinda, for I have something of great importance to say to you,—a very momentous question to ask you. Perhaps I ought to lead more gradually up to the subject,

but I always think what has to be done, is best done quickly ; but you, Dorinda. must answer me with much caution, and not lightly, not hurriedly, for not only your future happiness but that of others is involved in your decision.'

Dorinda was awed by the gravity in his tone and manner, and she began nervously to wonder :

'Can Edward Julian have written also to his brother, without my knowing it? (I did not look at Julian's letters!) Can Julian have asked Sir Jasper to forgive his brother for my sake? and to give his consent to our starving together? and is Sir Jasper going to say "Yes"? Good Heavens! I really could not assent to that!'

Sir Jasper said nothing more for a few

minutes, which seemed ages to Dorinda; then he again broke the silence, speaking calmly, almost coldly at first; but, as he went on, he betrayed such a passion of earnestness, that our heroine, accustomed to his more than ordinary placid exterior, gazed at him in amazement.

‘Miss Stratton,’ he said, ‘my sister has begged me, rather against my better judgment,—and my old-fashioned prejudices,—to speak to you on a subject which she has often pressed upon me before, but which I shrank from broaching to you, because—because it seemed so unnatural for one man to be spokesman for another upon such a subject! In my young days, Miss Stratton, a man (if he was worthy of the name) wooed the girl he loved him-

self, and would have scorned a go-between ! I always held that true love brooks no interference. Indeed, Miss Stratton,—if I were young again, and had my sight,—if I were wooing you—for myself, no one in earth or Heaven should come between us. No, Dorinda, I would myself kneel at your beloved feet, and ’ (passionately he spoke, and vehemently seized her hand) ‘ I would say, “ Dorinda, Dorinda ! I love you with every energy of my soul ! Do you—can you—will you love me ? ” ’

As he spoke Sir Jasper involuntarily pressed Dorinda’s hand to his lips, to his eyes—his poor, sightless eyes ; then suddenly he seemed to remember something,—to control himself, and, dropping the girl’s hand with an impatient

sigh, he said, mechanically, as though repeating a lesson he had learnt by rote :

‘ Forgive me, Miss Stratton ; what—oh, what have I been saying ? My sister begs me to ask you, and my nephew Julian also ventures to address you through me : will you be his wife ? He is my heir, and a good, steady, honourable young man. Henrietta says he loves you, and that she thinks—she hopes—you will not refuse him.’

Sir Jasper ceased, and listened eagerly for her answer ; but the girl’s whole face, attitude, and manner had undergone a change !

At last—at last she had divined the secret ! At last she knew why Sir Jasper

had dreaded asking her to be Julian's wife! and in a whisper of infinite tenderness,—for the first time in her life, feeling stirred to her inmost soul,—she murmured,

‘No, Sir Jasper, I cannot marry your nephew; I do not love him—and I never shall.’

‘Then,’ continued Sir Jasper, hurriedly, and with ever-increasing excitement, ‘I may (may I not?) *speak for myself!* Oh, Dorinda, I have tried to be fair and loyal with you both, have I not? Give me credit at least for that. But hear me now for myself—my poor blind self. I love you, dear, oh! I love you! and no one knew it! I have kept my love locked up here,’ taking Dorinda's trembling hand again, and crushing it to his breast, ‘and an unruly

prisoner it was! God only knows how it fought and struggled to burst its bonds! And I thought you loved Julian, Henrietta said you did; but, Dorinda, from the first moment I heard your voice,—your gentle silvery voice,—I felt that my solitary years of darkness were at an end, that I had found my guide,—my light,—my star! Dorinda, do not keep me in suspense! speak!—and yet, no! wait awhile, for how shall I hear your answer! and oh God! how can I expect you to love a poor blind man?—to sacrifice your beautiful young life, for the sake of becoming a blind man's eyes,—mind,—happiness,—everything! but, Dorinda, I *must* have your answer—so speak. Yes or no?’

But the girl was too honestly touched to

do so then. She paused ; then taking his hand, kissed it tenderly, and her voice shook as she presently faltered out :

‘ Yes, Sir Jasper, a thousand times yes ! for—*for I love you !*’ and at that moment, as far as her nature could, she really did love the man at her side, and for a happy five minutes her wretched home,—her school-life,—the cheque,—and that dreadful letter, all—all vanished from her mind, and she realized nought but the fact that she was tightly clasped to an honest man’s breast.

Once more she whispered,

‘ Jasper, I love you !’

No more, for his lips were pressed long and tightly to hers, and after some seconds of throbbing happiness to them both, he

murmured lovingly in her ear, '*Jour de ma vie*' (which she knew was his motto) and slipped a ring upon her finger, with those words enamelled upon it.

After a few moments' happy silence Sir Jasper said,

'And now, sweet heart, we will go and tell my sister!'

As he spoke, Dorinda awoke, as it were, from a blissful but ephemeral dream, and she knew that her troubles, her lying, her equivocations, were all about to recommence.

'What will she say?' burst from her lips as she clung to Sir Jasper's arm.

'Never fear,' he answered, encouragingly; 'always dare to be true; and, after all, what can there be for you to fear?'

A dagger seemed to pierce the girl's bosom at these words, and she but faintly returned the pressure of the protecting arm thrown around her, as Jasper rose, and placing his hand confidently on her shoulder, said,

‘Always so now! my guide through life!’

As they mounted the stairs together and approached Henrietta's room, Dorinda lived through years of apprehension, for she felt intuitively that, much as that lady would have rejoiced in welcoming her as her niece, she would scarcely care to give up her own position to her *protégée*, which of course, if all things went well, she would have to do.

‘I am not generally nervous,’ thought the girl, ‘but I wonder what on earth she’ll do!’

Miss de Broke, who had been eagerly waiting for the *dénouement* of her cherished project, heard the approaching footsteps, and, running to the door, opened it; then, seeing her brother and his companion enter the room so amicably together, she cried out excitedly:

‘Is it all settled? Where is Julian? Dorinda will never leave us now!’

‘Never!’ answered Sir Jasper, solemnly, ‘*till death us do part!*’ for, Henrietta, my own dear sister, Dorinda has promised to be—*my wife!*’

For once in her life Henrietta was stricken dumb! and for about the space

of a minute she looked from one to the other, with a blank and expressionless face; then, in an uncontrollable fit of anger and disappointment, all the latent coarse vulgarity of the woman burst forth.

‘Dorinda!’ she gasped, ‘you double-faced, sly, designing——’

‘Hold!’ cried Sir Jasper, authoritatively. ‘Henrietta Maria! In your own house, to a lady who is your guest!’ Then turning to his pale *fiancée* he kissed her hand respectfully, and whispered, tenderly: ‘For my sake, sweet heart, leave the room.’

Dorinda was only too glad to do so, for she longed to be alone, to collect her thoughts, being as much amazed as

Henrietta could be, at the turn things had taken; besides, the experience of being unfairly accused of falsehood and treachery (and certainly, as far as Sir Jasper's attachment to her was concerned, she was innocent as a babe!) was quite a new experience, and not altogether an unpleasant one. For the first time, too, in her life, her heart had spoken; and as she threw herself on the sofa in her bed-room, hiding her face in the pillows, she recognised something akin to real love for the noble and simple nature of this man who loved her! She felt a longing to be a good true wife, with one ever at her side who she could respect sufficiently to obey; one to whom she could be open and truthful—ay! and one

who (and, as she thought of this, the blood seemed to course more rapidly through her veins, and her eyes to fill with delicious tears!) would perhaps give her little children, who she would strive to bring up to be as loyal and faithful as their father!—but here—the shadow of another man,—of another life,—intruded itself on her memory, seeming to darken, envelope, and choke these good and happy thoughts.



CHAPTER XIV.

Defer no time, delays have dangerous ends !

SHAKESPEARE.

WHEN the brother and sister were left together in Henrietta's boudoir, there was at first an ominous silence between them; then Sir Jasper spoke.

‘Henrietta, I am at a loss to comprehend your most singular behaviour ! I thought that Miss Stratton was infinitely

beloved by you ! Also I thought, from your tender kindness of years, that my happiness was dear to you, and that your great object in life was the lightening of the sore burden which God has seen fit to cast upon me——’

‘Jasper,’ answered Henrietta, hardly, ‘so it is, and so, God knows, it has been ! but do you see nothing incongruous, nothing suspicious in Miss Stratton’s excessive readiness to transfer her affections so speedily from Julian to yourself?’

‘Did she ever say she loved Julian?’ asked Sir Jasper, hastily.

‘No,’ answered Henrietta, truthfully, ‘for I never asked her ; but it was by her tacit approval that I endeavoured to bring about her engagement to him.’

‘ Did you never ask her if she loved him ?’

‘ No.’

‘ Then how can you say or know she did ?’

‘ Pah ! You men are so blind !’ Then she felt she would have died rather than have made this apparently unfeeling speech, so she continued, hurriedly, ‘ so easily cheated——’

‘ I know, dear, what you mean,’ said Sir Jasper, kindly.

‘ I know you do, Jasper !’ said Henrietta, now bursting into tears, ‘ and believe me that by every means in my power, short of telling her, I made her understand my wishes for her marriage with Julian ! Why did she show no repugnance to it ?’

‘Henrietta, she loved me; and can you have no sympathy for the awkwardness of the girl’s position? She would have died, no doubt, rather than, by word or hint, betray her real feelings. Directly I mentioned Julian’s offer, (remember you forced me to speak to her about it, much against my will,) she refused him, and then I felt I was at liberty to speak for myself; for oh, Henrietta! I have loved her ever since the first day she blessed us with her presence! and if you had only seen her joy, her surprise, when I told her of my love, you would have been satisfied of her good faith.’

‘Well, Jasper, for your sake I will say no more, for it is just one of those cases that one can’t put into words; but

I shall never care for her again, never !'

Sir Jasper looked pained. He was far too noble, too simple a nature to suspect, or even to understand that a great element in his sister's anger consisted in the prospective fall she would sustain in her worldly position ; and also, that she would have to play 'second fiddle' to one who had been her humble *protégée*, and who had ever toadied her to the top of her bent ! But this was not all ; Henrietta's *amour propre* was wounded, for she suspected that she had been made a fool of by Dorinda, cheated under her very nose ! So she hated the girl, and felt she always would.

'Henrietta,' at last said Sir Jasper, taking his sister's hand and kissing it gently ; 'for years you and I have lived

together and loved one another, and all I had was yours and will be, for I am sure Dorinda will be the last to wish to separate us.'

Henrietta was touched with her brother and kissed his forehead ; but his very words, meant so kindly, had put crudely before her that what had been her right would now be a favour, (if she accepted it, which she said to herself she would rather die than do). So once more pressing her lips to his forehead, she said,

' Well, dear, as it seems so far settled between you, I will go and speak kindly to her.' And Sir Jasper, not understanding either of the natures he had to deal with, augured well from his sister's words, and for the moment felt supremely happy.

‘ They are both angelic natures in their different ways,’ he thought, ‘and our home will be a patriarchal one ! We will all live together, I and my dear wife, my sister and nephews. God has been very good to me !’

As Dorinda was sitting upon her sofa, full of hopeful thoughts, some one opened the door noisily and walked in. It was Miss de Broke, looking still very red and dishevelled.

She rolled majestically into the room, and sat down ; and, as soon as she could regain her breath, she said, with an air of *travaillé* dignity :

‘ Miss Stratton.’

‘ Why not “ Dorinda ! ” ’ murmured our heroine.

‘Miss Stratton,’ obstinately repeated Henrietta.

‘“Dorinda,” you mean,’ persisted the young lady, who had her own share of obstinacy.

‘Well—well,’ gobbled Henrietta, irritably, ‘I come to say that my brother assures me you have not dealt unfairly—or——’

‘Stop, Miss de Broke,’ cried Dorinda, ‘and, before you say more, hear me! How can you accuse me of entrapping Sir Jasper (as I suppose that is what you suspect me of)? I have lived openly with you all these months—so how *can* there have been anything that you did not see? How *could* I tell you, or anyone, the thoughts of my inmost soul? I have loved your

brother ever since I saw him, but how could I act differently from what I did? Would it have been maidenly,—delicate, had I put into words your wishes concerning your nephew and my future,—wishes which you had, after all, only hinted at? Wishes too—which I felt I should reject! Besides,—would you not have cross-questioned me? and then—then I might have betrayed myself? No, no! Be fair—be just, and believe me when I say that my wildest dreams never suggested the possibility of my attaining such happiness as your brother's love! It came upon me like a sudden flood of God's blessed sunlight, and, oh! Henrietta, I will make him a loving wife, and you a devoted sister!

Then, throwing herself into the still-indignant and unwilling lady's arms, she wept tears of joy inexpressible.

Henrietta, of course, could say no more, and, after some kisses and tears on both sides, Dorinda hoped she had overcome Henrietta's animosity; but these hopes, as we shall see, were not long-lived, nor destined to bear fruit.

Henrietta now remembered the unfortunate would-be lover, Julian Edward, who was all this time cooling his heels in the music-room, wondering what they were all about, and every moment expecting the advent of a blushing and conscious Dorinda. Instead of her, however, his aunt appeared, and, after giving him a highly-coloured account of what had occurred,—interlarding the recital with many imagin-

ary facts, and accusing Dorinda of having laid a trap for them, into which they had all fallen pell-mell—she advised the wrathful young man (who was, of course, after the manner and justice of young men, quite as irate against the weeping Henrietta's 'mismanagement' as against the fair cause of all the hubbub) to pack up at once, and leave the Abbey—which he did; and we are not aware that Dorinda and the indignant Bruin ever met again,—except once, as we shall see, and then accidentally.

Things went on quietly at the Abbey for some days after these events, but as the fact gradually impressed itself upon Henrietta that people (the neighbours, servants, &c.) had already, after the fashion of the world, begun to worship the

rising sun, and that the French cry of '*Le Roi est mort! Vive le Roi!*' was exemplified in her own case, she felt it bitterly, being neither noble nor unselfish enough to join in the cry; and when, one dreadful day, Dorinda appeared, with Sir Jasper's royal ring upon her finger—that ring containing Charles the Martyr's hair, which had never been worn, except by the head of the family since it had been presented by the ill-fated monarch to their ancestor, Sir Aubry de Broke,—the unhappy woman could bear it no longer, and, in spite of the gentleness and submission with which Dorinda thought it expedient to treat her, (for the time,) she decided upon leaving the Abbey at once, knowing that under

such circumstances our heroine must leave it also, till such time as she should return as its mistress.

Sir Jasper had to break his sister's resolve to his *fiancée*, at the same time asking her tenderly her wishes about the day of the marriage; and Dorinda (feeling that now was the time for her to hurry on events as much as she decently could, so as to lessen the risk of unpleasant revelations of any kind coming between her and her happiness) with many sighs and tears, and with her bashful face pressed to his breast, told Sir Jasper, for the first time, of her wretched home, and unhappy childhood; of her hard, cruel mother, and her drunken and immoral

father ; all of which staggered poor Sir Jasper, whose most solemn creed (next to those in the Prayer-book) was embodied in the expressive words, '*Noblesse oblige.*'

He had long suspected that all was not as it should be between Dorinda and her parents, for although he had already received a few words from Lady Balbirnie from abroad, full of gushing joy at the news (instantly communicated to her by Dorinda) of her 'beloved child's' happiness, he had been surprised that neither she nor Lord Balbirnie had expressed any intention of coming to England ; but now he understood it ; for, from what Dorinda had just confessed, he suspected that debts kept them away. So he determined not to humiliate his *fiancée*

by asking her any more questions; and he was inexpressibly touched by what he considered her childlike innocence, when one day as he was urging upon her the necessity of his going to London to make settlements upon her, to alter his will for her sake, &c., &c., she burst into tears, and, throwing her soft arms round his neck, sobbed out:

‘Jasper! give me one more proof of your love, by granting me this favour. Make no settlements upon me. I want none. I only want *you*! I come to you a pauper, and I expect no riches—no grandeur. Let us tell no one our marriage-day; and let us walk to church together, dear—the church in which I saw you first!—I in a cotton gown, and

you with your hand on my shoulder, guiding you ! and let us be quietly married, without any preparation—any crowd. The beadle,’ she said, laughing, ‘can give me away ; and you can make settlements afterwards ;’ and she knew he would. (‘Anything, anything,’ she said, nervously, to herself, ‘to get the marriage irrevocably over.’)

‘ My own sweet heart,’ answered Sir Jasper. ‘ It is like you to be so trustful ! And happy am I to find one who despises pomp and circumstance. I too have a little confession to make. I am weak and foolish enough to dread parading my misfortune before others ; and I too am anxious to get the marriage over in our quiet little country church, with-

out any lookers-on! And we can only do this by concealing the day,—and by its taking place before it has been gossiped about. So write, dearest, and tell your parents that I am going to steal you—almost surreptitiously.'

Dorinda required no second bidding; indeed, she had already written to her mother warning her of the possible danger of procrastination, and of the chance (although a remote one) of her inconvenient lover (number one) turning up, and 'spoiling the whole thing.'

So Lady Balbirnie had taken the hint, and wrote by return to Sir Jasper, saying that her husband's precarious state of health precluded her return home for months, and that, 'as, upon principle,'

(how Dorinda laughed when she read this!) ‘she objected to long engagements (and especially so in the present case, for obvious reasons), she trusted arrangements might be made for a quiet and a speedy marriage.’ She enclosed a small sum for the *trousseau*, and finished her epistle by invoking blessings upon the heads of all parties concerned in the business,—and upon Sir Jasper’s in particular.

Sir Jasper, seeing, to his great satisfaction, that everyone’s wishes coincided with his own, and becoming every day more attached to Dorinda, and anxious to shield her from the daily petty annoyances inflicted upon her by Henrietta’s jealousy, decided that the marriage should take place immediately; and that instead

of his sister leaving the Abbey at once, as she vindictively declared she would, she was, under pain of her brother's lasting displeasure, to stay there till the day before the marriage, when she and Dorinda were to move to the Vicarage (the Vicar's wife was a great ally of Sir Jasper's), and stay there that night. The wedding would then take place the following day from the Vicarage, the bride and her husband returning directly after the ceremony to the Abbey, where they would spend the honeymoon.

After some difficulty, Henrietta consented, though with a bad grace; and, everything being arranged to Dorinda's satisfaction, she was on the very threshold of happiness; but at times a shadow *would*

come over her, and she would hear a voice, '*God deal with us, as we . . .*' and a hand would seem to draw her away, as she clung to her future husband's side.

But she *would not* hear! She resolutely closed her eyes and heart to the Past.

'Once his wife! once his wife!' she muttered, 'and he will forgive me for his own sake, for he loves me so; and it won't be worth Edward Julian's while to wreck his uncle's happiness. And yet—oh, yet! how will it all end? I cannot pray to God for help! He would not hear me! Shall I pray to Fate?—or to the Devil? Shall I call the Devil to my aid? Anything—anything, so that I am once his wife.'



CHAPTER XV.

‘Oh, that a man might know
 The end of this day’s business ere it come !
 But it sufficeth that the day will end,
 And then the end is known.’



THE eve of the marriage had arrived, and the young Summer’s first beauties seemed put forth to welcome the coming festival. This night Dorinda was to sleep at the Vicarage, and, having been chafed almost past bearing and irritated all day by Henrietta’s

insolences, as soon as dinner was over, she put on her hat and hurriedly went out into the park for a quiet stroll, to wile away the hour or so, before her departure for the Vicarage.

‘I will take a very short walk,’ she thought, as she started, ‘and, when I feel sure Henrietta is upstairs worrying her maid about her smart gown, I will creep back, and sit with my beloved in his own den. In four-and-twenty hours’ time,’ she whispered, ‘I shall be Jasper’s wife, Lady de Broke, and a few hours later, I shall have returned to the Abbey as its mistress! Oh, how happy I shall be!’—but she shrank, and a chill seemed to creep over her, in spite of the summer weather. ‘*Shall* I be

happy? with such a black secret twined round and round me like a serpent? Psha! Any change would be preferable to my life before I knew Jasper! But I shall not feel safe, I *am not* safe—really safe, till his ring is round my finger; and yet--there can in reality be no danger of *his* return! Oh! all my life I will try to compensate for this deception, this concealment, by my love—my lifelong devotion to my husband!’

Just then she came to a small bridge which stretched across a narrow stream, and she stood for one moment, watching the water as it meandered lazily by, and admiring the reflection of the moon which trembled on its surface. The bridge was composed of a single arch, and the rise to

its summit was very steep. Pausing to regain her breath, she leisurely descended on the other side, and entered a group of trees which grew close to the water's edge. The moonbeams shone brightly between the branches, clearly marking the pathway through the wood; but the shadows amongst the trees were very deep. Entering the wood Dorinda stooped to admire and pick some primroses, when—suddenly her heart stood still, for she became aware of *a man* evidently watching her from behind a tree.

She was much alarmed, and turning abruptly, endeavoured to re-gain the bridge. She did so; but as she toiled up the steep pathway, to her dismay a hurried but firm tread followed—gained upon her. She

quicken'd her pace, but her strength failed, her legs refused their office ; then a hand she knew too well, was roughly laid upon her shoulder !

She neither screamed nor fainted, nor did she at first venture to look round ; for instinctively she *knew* that what she had dreaded—what she had schemed against—what she would have sold her soul to avert, had come upon her!—That Edward Julian, her beggar-lover, was by her side !

At first she stood transfixed ; then turned to look piteously in his face, in the wild hope of mercy ; but there was no mercy there.

‘Dorinda,’ he said, and his voice was low and hoarse, ‘I have been watching for you all day, and now I have you face to

face, *and alone!* Nay, you need not fear. I am not going to murder you,' (with a bitter smile). 'Now tell me,' and as he spoke, his hand involuntarily clutched her shoulder till she shrank and cried out; but he took no notice,—only repeating roughly,

'Now tell me! Is it true what I hear, that you are on the point of marriage with Sir Jasper, with *my uncle?* yes or no,' peering into her face; 'but, psha!' he pursued, pushing her violently from him, 'why do I ask? for you'd lie your soul away—if you have one! but lying is of no use now.'

Then, seizing her again by the shoulder, he stooped down and uttered a word in her ear. Whereupon she turned upon

him like some hunted animal at bay.

‘Take your hand off my shoulder,’ she said, in a savage whisper, ‘a better man’s hand than yours has rested there.’

‘Yes,’ he answered, ‘and for the last time! You little thought,’ he added, mockingly, his eyes glittering like a viper’s, ‘that your *quondam* lover would return—just in time—just in time! You thought he was away, miles away, beyond the sea, working, poor fool, working for you! Ay, and you would have let him work,—die,—rot out there, before one word from your sweet lips would have saved him! Then, forsooth, you must try ‘your hand upon the heir, and you cheated him also! for it pleased you better to reign at once. So you cast your covetous eyes on the poor

blind man, and—Delilah that you are!—fooled us all three!’

He paused, gasping for breath, and for the first time Dorinda remarked that he looked deadly pale and ill.

‘Oh, God!’ she impiously prayed, ‘strike him dead! strike him dead!’ then seeing that he still was silent, apparently from sheer weakness, and that he must perforce listen to her words, the unhappy girl said eagerly :.

‘Julian! hear me! So help me God, I never tried to win Sir Jasper; he loved me all unsought. Oh, Julian! Julian! You don’t know what a hell is in my heart! You don’t know my wretched life! I was ever an ill-used, unhappy child, educated by blows and harshness,

taught to lie and deceive. Save, oh, save me from being a broken-hearted, reckless, miserable woman. Don't—don't betray me! for I long so for a Home! Give me a chance, and let me lead a good, useful life—a happy life—with a good man. Julian, you *can* save me! Have mercy!

She threw herself at his feet; but, raising her roughly, he said, with a sneer:

‘Mercy! Mercy you ask from *me*! Had *you* mercy when *I* pleaded for help at your hands, so that I might begin a new and honourable life? Did *you* have mercy when you let me go—you neither knew nor cared where—so that I went? *I*, too, who loved what others would have scorned! Listen, Dorinda! up to yesterday even I

loved you, for, with all your faults that I knew of, I thought you were true to me. When I left you, I travelled day after day in that dreadful ship, working like a common sailor ; miserable, friendless, down-hearted, but with the thought of you and your love uppermost ! For I looked upon you as my wife, except in the name. I was stricken with fever, and I thought, (indeed they all thought,) I should die, and never see you again ; and oh ! how I longed to see your face, to hear your voice, to feel the touch of your hand ! So I paid my last shilling to return in a homeward-bound vessel. Weak and ill I returned, only yesterday, to my brother, and, oh my God ! that I had died before hearing the shameful story of your falseness ! Do-

rinda, you are mine, and you know it ; but I would not touch your soiled hand in love again, not to save my unhappy life—or yours. Nor will I say one word to save you from the life of baseness and pollution which such as you must end in.’

Dorinda here made a mute gesture of supplication, but he went on :

‘ Yes, you have worked and schemed cleverly to hurry on your marriage, thinking that, once a good man’s wife, you would be safe. But I am here to save that good man from the disgrace of calling a thing like you—wife ! His arms shall never embrace you, for mine have done so first ; his lips shall never touch yours, for they are polluted lips ! Your children shall never own these lands, and

your dishonoured dust shall never defile the graves of the De Brokes !'

He paused, as though lacking strength to proceed, and Dorinda would have spoken ; but, raising his hand imperiously, he said, in a fainter voice :

‘ One word more. I once told you, in the heat of my foolish passion, that I had rather see you dead at my feet than belonging to another ; but that folly is past. You may marry—deceive who you like, I care not ; and my revenge ends *here*. Only leave my family untouched, unpolluted by your presence, and from *me* you will have nothing to fear, for the De Brokes,’ (proudly,) ‘are all gentlemen where a woman, (even though she be as base as you), is concerned !’

He ceased, and as the wretched girl heard these terrible words, not only of dead love, but of disgust and contempt, she felt there was no hope. She had sufficient knowledge of the character of the man by her side to be certain that nothing now could move him.

‘You mean to betray me, then, to Sir Jasper?’ she said, coldly.

Edward Julian laughed.

‘I mean to prevent your betraying *him*.’

‘Then,’ she said, pointing to the Abbey, ‘your way lies there. Go, and be the bearer of sorrow and evil tidings! I doubt your welcome. As for me, I will never darken those beloved doors again.’ Then, turning towards the young man, she

said, deliberately, and almost calmly :
'And may God's curse go with you
now, and wherever you go !'

Before he could answer, she turned and left him, striking into the thickest part of the high ferns and brushwood which grew to a man's height, and disappearing at once in the darkness.

Edward Julian stood irresolute for a moment, but the girl hurried on through the damp grass, deeper and deeper into the wood, then sank exhausted upon a felled tree, while through the stillness of the summer night she could distinctly hear the echo of the young man's footsteps, as he strode hastily towards the Abbey.



CHAPTER XVI.

By mine honour, I will deal in this
 As secretly and justly, as your soul
 Should with your body.

SHAKESPEARE.



THE most maddening thoughts
 now racked the wretched girl's
 brain, and, amid them all, one
 grand, calm, noble face stood out clear
 and sharp in her imagination, and she
 shuddered to think how that face would
 look now! After awhile, though over-

come by weeping and despair, she tried to struggle onward, she knew not,—cared not whither; but presently she heard the sound of voices, and saw the light of two lanterns, and, being near enough to hear the conversation, she gathered that the old gardener (a trusted and valued friend and servant of the family) accompanied by his wife, and with a pony-chair at the rear, had been sent by Sir Jasper to seek the unhappy fugitive; so she cast herself on the grass, crouching close beneath the felled trunk, and lay still as death, till they had passed by, in an agony lest they should discover her; for she felt that any torture would be preferable to that of returning to the Abbey, and meeting Henrietta's triumphant glances.

When everything was again quiet, she raised herself wearily upon the tree-trunk, and as she sat, she could distinctly see the old Abbey, and she watched as one by one the coloured lights, emanating from the painted glass of the gothic windows, were extinguished,—those windows which ever made the building appear church-like and sacred, and all the more so to her now. As she looked, she noticed that one solitary lamp still burned brightly. It was, she knew, in the music-room; and she moaned as she reflected *who* it was that still waked and watched, and perhaps wept for her sake.

At last, feeling chilled to the bone, and wet through, from the falling dew, she rose slowly, aching in every limb, and the

thought forced itself upon her, 'I cannot stay out of doors all night! I will go to the Vicarage. The Vicar is a man of God, and therefore ought to be a man of mercy and pity! Perhaps he will give me shelter for the night, and to-morrow I will return—home,' (she shuddered at the word). 'Thank God my father and mother are away! I will send for Estelle from the Abbey.'

As these thoughts passed through her mind, she approached the Vicarage door—a door which the Vicar forbade should ever be locked night or day, so that, he said, the suffering and outcasts might claim his help at all hours.

Turning the door-handle, Dorinda entered the small hall, but upon seeing the

flowers and festive decorations,—preparations for her marriage the next day, that marriage which would now never take place,—the full misery of her position, and the utterly hopeless weight of her wretchedness, seemed more than her heart,—her brain could bear; and with one bitter and despairing cry, which seemed to ring through the small silent house, and up into its very rafters, she fell forward upon her face in a dead faint.

How long she remained unconscious she never knew—never cared to ask; but when she came to herself she was in bed, the Vicar's wife by her side, in tears, and holding her hand. She felt too weak, too powerless even to turn her head, but she whispered:

‘Where am I?—where is Jasper?’ and, the sound of her own words bringing back with them all the horrors of recollection, she swooned again.

For days her case was very critical; she wandered in her mind, knew no one, and then became dangerously violent,—would have strangled herself with her handkerchief, and, when that danger was averted, endeavoured to dash her head against the wall. She constantly and piteously called out, ‘Jasper, Jasper! I love you, Jasper! and I have a fire in my head!’ and once a vague misty fancy seized her,—that as she called out,—a cool tender hand took her burning one,—a face with dark sad eyes bent over hers,—that tears fell upon her face,—refreshing her as a summer shower

would a dying flower withered up by a pitiless burning sun. Be this as it may, the feverish outbursts were quelled, but utter, perilous weakness succeeded. The blessed fancy, however, never left her, till gradually it became fainter and fainter, and everything once more became chaos.

But one day,—one wretched day,—she became confusedly aware that church bells were ringing somewhere near, and she heard a man's voice say :

‘ She will do now—only keep her very quiet.’

She opened her eyes, and, turning her head, again saw the Vicar's wife, who came forward, and, after forbidding her to speak, put a pencil and a slate at her side. She took no notice, and for hours obstinately

refused food. Then the Vicar himself appeared at her bed-side, and warned her that, unless she ate, she must die.

‘Let me die!’ she murmured.

‘Are you prepared to die?’ the good man asked.

She made no reply; but, when the holy man began to speak gently of Jesus’ tenderness for sinners,—of Hope for the Future, she shook her head with a gesture of disgust, and wrote upon the slate:

‘No hope for me, but as a gentleman I require you to keep my story to yourself—as secret as though it were a confession.’

The Vicar bowed and answered,

‘Your confidence will be respected; and

I am further empowered by—by——’

The girl looked quickly at him, and sat up, then hiding her face with one fever-wasted hand, put the other out deprecatingly, signing to him that she understood his meaning—but imploring him for mercy’s sake, not to mention the dear name.

‘I am empowered,’ the Vicar continued, with much gentleness, ‘to say that the last few months will be to *him* as far as possible (as well as to those in his house) as though they had never been. Also that *his* most sacred endeavour will be to shield you and your name from harm, and *he* prays God to bless and keep you now and always.’

Dorinda made no answer, but sank back on her pillow, closing her eyes as though

she heard not ; but one large tear escaped from the closed and deeply-fringed lid, like the thunder-drop which heralds a storm—a storm which by God's mercy broke forth in an overwhelming shower, relieving the aching bosom, which was bursting with pent-up sorrow.

Grateful to see her weep, with a touch of sympathy upon the unhappy girl's shoulder, the Vicar left the room, and his wife re-entered it. After the first violence of her sobbing was over, Dorinda lay back motionless ; then, suddenly seizing the slate and pencil, she wrote,

‘Thank you for care ; feel much stronger, but from henceforth will see or speak to no one but you. I will receive no letters,

will hear no news ; as soon as I am able, I shall go to London. Send for Estelle from the Abbey.'

After writing, she sank back exhausted ; and she kept her resolve, seeing and speaking to no one, and keeping her eyes persistently closed. She scarcely moved, looked ghastly pale, and barely ate enough to keep body and soul together.

One day Estelle arrived, and approached Dorinda's bedside. The poor maid's eyes were swelled with weeping, and she kissed her mistress's hand, as it lay pale and thin upon the coverlid. Dorinda opened her eyes, smiled slightly at seeing her, and raised herself in bed. She gave the Frenchwoman some private instructions, and lay down again, and, upon

leaving her mistress, Estelle quickly put up the few things that Dorinda had brought with her, laid others out ready for her to wear, and quietly left the Vicarage.

Dorinda, as soon as she was alone, rose, looked eagerly at the clock, staggered to the door and locked it; then, approaching the looking-glass, she stood amazed at the change in her appearance. Looking round, she spied some brandy which had been placed there during her illness; and, with a shaking hand, she poured out half a wineglass full, and drank it pure. It seemed to strengthen her, and she hurriedly dressed, throwing a large cloak over her, which completely hid her figure, and covering

her face with a thick black lace veil. Putting a small velvet case in her pocket, she opened the door, crept downstairs, and glided unnoticed from the house.

She passed quickly out of the Vicarage garden, into the Broke Abbey Park, fancying that the very deer started and fled from her, as from an unsettled and cursed spirit ! She walked on quickly till she came close to the Abbey, and, seeing that the carriage was at the door, she hid herself under the high ferns, and waited.

She saw Henrietta, looking happy, fat, and well-liking, roll up the carriage-steps, and sink placidly amongst the carriage cushions. Her two nephews

followed her, the eldest looking sullen and stupid, and the youngest pale and unhappy.

How little they knew who was crouching so close, as almost to touch them; nor who cursed them with bitter curses as they all three passed.

As soon as the carriage was out of sight, Dorinda crept round the corner, to the other side of the house,—still concealed by the shrubs and ferns,—and reconnoitered. Suddenly a familiar sound struck her ear, and, as the tones of the organ rose and fell, swelled and subsided, she whispered to herself:

‘I have timed it well. I thought I should find him alone at this hour;’ for she knew *who* was the musician,

and a wild, uncontrollable longing had entered her heart, to be once more alone with the one being who, for a time, she had loved as well—and now and then better—than herself! Ay, and she loved him then, better than she knew. (But that knowledge increased as the years rolled on! Poor, wretched Dorinda!)

‘If, by good luck,’ she said to herself, ‘the window in the music-room,—which opens to the ground,—is ajar, I shall obtain my desire.’

So, creeping beneath the lilac and laburnum-trees, which were in fullest bloom, and thick enough in foliage to hide her slender figure, she approached the window. Oh, joy! it was open;

and in a moment she was standing inside the room ! No one, she knew, dared disturb Sir Jasper while at the organ, so she sank down in a chair, weak from illness,—faint from emotion,—and watched him. Oh, how changed ! how pale ! how broken he looked ! and, as he continued playing, the music seemed, to Dorinda's heated imagination, to weep and wail out, 'Dorinda ! Dorinda ! No hope ! No hope !'

Presently, she stealthily approached the blind man, whose whole soul seemed to go out in the chords,—a hand he knew seized his own,—and, before he could speak, he felt it pressed by soft clinging lips,—and bedewed by raining tears.

A ring—his own royal ring—was placed

upon his finger, then he heard a sob—a cry of anguish, the rustling of a woman's gown,—hasty footsteps,—and he was alone!

Like a dark phantom Dorinda passed quickly out of the window, beneath the lilac-bushes (from which she plucked one blossom and hid it in her breast), and without pausing, sped through the park. Passing through a gate, she found a hired vehicle, with Estelle awaiting her.

She entered the carriage, and as the frightened Frenchwoman uttered an exclamation of dismay at her mistress's wild appearance, Dorinda said imperiously, almost savagely,

‘Don't speak to me, do you hear? and—take me back to my wretched home!’



CHAPTER XVII.

Affliction may one day smile again, and till then,
Sit thou down, sorrow.

SHAKESPEARE.



AFTER the overwhelming catastrophe related in our last chapter, Dorinda went through sufficient distress of mind, and weakness of body, to have satisfied the malice of her bitterest enemies. She kept her bed for many days (after her return home) and her room for weeks,—in fact, till her parents' return ;

and after that (to her) unwelcome event, she sternly refused all companionship; for hers was not a home where the comfort of sympathy would be offered. No, she knew she would be looked upon by her family in the same light as a certain youthful acrobat, whose performance she had once witnessed, who, while attempting a difficult flying feat, not only had failed, but had had the further misfortune of kicking his instructor's nose in his flight! thus bringing discredit on that worthy's teaching, and personal damage as well. Dorinda's mother had been her life-long instructress, so she expected no sympathy from her; nor from her father, for the matter of that; for both parents were equally disgusted at not

having got rid of an encumbrance ; and they also greatly feared that the story of their daughter's discomfiture would get about, and bring public dishonour and ridicule upon them all,—indeed, for some time they lived in abject terror lest ‘something should come out.’ But such natures as theirs, could little understand the agony of Sir Jasper's wounded affection, or fathom his fastidious tenderness for, and care of, the reputation of the woman he had so loved. By his own rigid silence upon the subject,—a silence which, at the risk of his heaviest displeasure, he enforced upon his family and household,—the story was but a nine days' wonder, never quite understood, and quickly forgotten ; so that, to the sur-

prise of her parents, nothing ever did 'come out'; and once more Lady Balbirnie had reason to confess that Dorinda had cleverly 'wriggled' out of this scrape also!

After Dorinda's recovery, she underwent one stormy interview with her mother, which culminated in Lady Balbirnie's coming to two decisions. The first being that she should at once discharge the French maid Estelle, as an uselessly expensive luxury; and the second, that she would keep her daughter at home a little longer, and give her one more chance.

The discharge of her maid was a great trouble to Dorinda. There had been perfect confidence between her and Estelle; begun at first on both sides from interest, and increased by habit. Both mistress

and maid were, alas! unscrupulous and unprincipled; but the dominant passion in Estelle's bosom was love for, and admiration of, her beautiful mistress; and, in spite of her many shortcomings, the poor maid had a warm and steadfast heart. She had gloried in Dorinda's beauty and successes, and had often helped to bring about the latter; she had also seen her through her great sorrow at Broke Abbey—indeed, at that time, she alone had had it in her power to show sympathy to the unhappy girl (who fiercely rejected it); and, when Lady Balbirnie discharged her, Estelle's grief was very real; and the day she left, and for weeks after, she was haunted by the last sight she had had of the beautiful face, defiantly miserable,

which gazed out after her from the garret-window, with eyes that glared like living coals, quenching any tears which might have refreshed them.

Ay! and as the poor, erring French-woman wended her dusty way to the station (she never forgot the circumstance), she met two blackguards, Italian cowards, leading a muzzled bear between them (no larger than a big dog), which, in their mean and beggarly cruelty, they belaboured with sticks, while the beast, in its hopeless and passionate rage, growled out its hate and contempt of its persecutors, and tore up the ground in its pathetic despair!

Estelle, seeing the beast, loved it—understanding and respecting the dignity of its

untameable nature—doubly grand, because coupled with wretched helplessness ; besides, in its defiant and courageous misery, she saw a type of her unhappy mistress ! So she sat under a hedge as the two brutes and the Bear passed her by—and wept—and was late for the train !

During the one discussion which took place between Dorinda and her mother, the former discovered that in her once callous heart, she experienced some secretly gentle tendencies, which, if indulged in, would prove traitors to her advancement in life ; so she set to work at once, and ruthlessly,—remorselessly,—stamped them out (or thought she did), much as history of nearly two hundred years ago tells us, a certain royal favourite

crushed a once-beloved,—still-beautiful,—but now dead Face, beneath her meretricious high-heeled shoe!

Other tendencies less unnerving, and more useful, our heroine determined to foster and develop; so for nearly three years (during which time she considered it expedient to remain *perdue*) she untiringly cultivated her many talents and accomplishments.

During this retirement, she made but one acquaintance, which, however, quickly ripened (at all events upon one side) into real friendship.

A young married lady, called Lady Olive Ramsay, was one day walking with her husband and baby-girl beneath the trees of Richmond Park. The child (between two and three years old) was in

high glee, chasing a ball which her father was throwing on in front, and, seeing no obstacle in his way, Mr. Ramsay had just launched the ball amongst some shrubs, when a lady emerged therefrom, holding her handkerchief up to her face, having evidently received the missile upon her forehead. Apologies were tendered, which were laughingly received by Dorinda (for it was she), and the two ladies, who had known one another by name, and by sight, for long, improved the occasion, and ended by becoming intimately acquainted.

Mr. and Lady Olive Ramsay were at this time residing at the latter's pretty house on the Thames, called Riverstairs, which was situated close to Falcon's Rest, the beautiful property of Mr. Ramsay's

parents, Lord and Lady Glenalmond. The gardens of both houses lay side by side, each having a hanging terrace over the river, and there was a door of communication between the two, 'whereby hung a tale,' for the said door had been formed during the happy days when Ion Ramsay and Olive Roslyon were lovers, by the breaking through of the old, ivy-clad, high brick wall, which the young people had decided should no longer divide them.

Both Falcon's Rest and Riverstairs were but a short distance from the ill-kept, vulgar suburban villa inhabited by the ruined gamester and his wife, Lord and Lady Balbirnie; and Olive's heart had often ached at the sight of the beautiful

and solitary girl whose pale face and swollen eyes told their own story of sorrow and neglect.

Little by little, after their accidentally-formed acquaintance, Olive's ready sympathy encouraged Dorinda to confess to her new friend, the wretchedness of her home; and no doubt Olive's kindness of heart and cheerful companionship would have considerably lightened the weight of Dorinda's troubles;—besides, who knows what the wholesome friendship of a true, good woman might not have been to the unhappy friendless girl—at that moment! But it was not to be, for a change came over Olive's circumstances, which we will proceed to relate.

Mr. Ramsay's health began to fail, and,

with a cold, nameless dread, Lady Olive heard the doctor inquire into the medical history of the young man's family, whether any of his blood relations were, or had been, afflicted with pulmonary disease?

Alas! yes. His mother's sister, also his eldest brother, and his brother's young wife (who also was a cousin), had all died of the insidious malady.

The doctor received these revelations with a serious face, and begged for further advice. An eminent physician and subsequently a specialist were called in, and they all agreed that the young man must start at once for Italy, which he did, accompanied by his sorrowing wife; and for the present Dorinda saw Olive no more.

Lord and Lady Glenalmond were a cold,

proud pair, steeped to the lips in the sense of their own dignity, and in a selfish indifference to the feelings of those around them. They rejoiced in an old title, and in great wealth, both of which facts they carefully impressed, by word and action, upon all with whom they came in contact. Lord Glenalmond possessed magnificent estates, and an ancient castle in the Highlands; and he had married a Miss Rosemount—a beauty, and a great heiress of lands, also in the Highlands,—and she was in every way as proud of her family and pedigree as Lord Glenalmond was of his. From their early youth both had lived entirely in the north (hence their unmitigated brogue, of which they were vastly proud). Both had become orphans in

their earliest youth, and, both being rich, everyone about them had conspired to toady them, and ruin their natures.

After marriage they continued to live among their own people, who respected their wealth, their grandeur, and their passionless respectability;—flattered them to the top of their bent,—and heartily hated them.

Being now in the sere and yellow leaf, Lord Glenalmond had discovered that he could neither shoot nor fish as he once could, while my-lady, having married all her daughters, had no one now living with her, who it was any amusement to bully or browbeat; so, to tell the truth, the two old people had become rather bored,—somewhat overfilled with each other's company;

they therefore decided to leave Scotland, and live for a while, at all events, at Falcon's Rest,—their lovely place on the Thames, where they would see more people than in the Highlands;—and it was in consequence of this move, that their second son, Ion, became acquainted with the pretty Olive Roslyon, whose mother's place 'marched' with the Falcon's Rest property.

Lord and Lady Glenalmond, although not relations, were curiously alike in appearance, both being tall, angular, and bony. Both had eyes set close to each other, both had cruel, aquiline noses and thin lips. The principal difference between the faces was that, whereas my-lord's eyes were the very palest blue, like a

vulture's, my-lady's were piercingly black, like an eagle's, and when she was in a stern mood, (which she generally was), her brows would meet in a straight line over her nose, and the eyes would apparently contract, getting closer and closer, till, to the alarmed observer, they appeared to meet, and become one eye instead of two ! Whether they really did so, or whether it was only an optical delusion caused by the awe the lady inspired, her ladyship's dependants dared not look long enough to decide.

Lord Glenalmond invariably wore a skull-cap of some black material ; and vulgarians (like the traditional fool, that rushes in where angels fear to tread) whispered that his lordship was—bald ! No

one, however, but his lordship's valet could be certain of the fact, and it was too sacred and awful a subject to be meddled with.

Lady Glenalmond's hair was snowy white, and the contrast between it and her black eyes and eyebrows, was terrifying in the extreme—especially to children.

This amiable couple had had a family of three daughters (all married, luckily for them, and 'awa!') and two sons, both of whom (as we stated above) were attacked and eventually carried off by the pitiless disease—consumption. The elder son Lord Ramsay and his wife (a first cousin) both died, (being yet young,) leaving a large family of sons and one daughter. The second son, Ion Ramsay, married Olive

Roslyon, and it was always supposed that any little parental feeling which Lord and Lady Glenalmond possessed was centred in their younger son ; anyhow, one would have supposed, that, after losing one son, the survivor would have been doubly precious to them, but this was not their way. They had ever been hard and overbearing in their natures, and remained so, both to their children, and to their children's children ; and, although Ion survived his brother for some years, they never became one whit more gentle towards him, nor more anxious to make his life happy.

Lord Ramsay died a few months after his wife, leaving his sons, and his lovely little Leonora to his parents' care, writing a touching letter to his mother

recommending them to her tenderness (?) and parental care. The old people, however, were not in the least touched, and were overwhelmed with indignation at the dead man's bad taste and want of tact, first, in dying so inconveniently, when he had such a large family of young children, and last, not least, at his leaving the said family under their charge. Consequently they were adamant in their treatment of the hapless orphans, and only anxious to bring them up on as little money and as little love as it was possible for young bodies and hearts to live upon. The boys were scattered hither and thither to cheap (and generally nasty) schools, and the little Leonora was packed off at once to a *pensionnat* at Versailles, and was

never allowed to return, even for the holidays.

One day (Ion and Olive were living happily together at Riverstairs—which had recently become Olive's own property) Lady Glenalmond sent hurriedly for her son, to break to him, with expressions of the bitterest annoyance, that an intimation had arrived from Versailles, stating that Leonora's school-mistress had died suddenly ; that the school was broken up ; and that Leonora Ramsay, (then sixteen years of age,) must leave Versailles at once, and be consigned to the care of her nearest relations.

As if the bare fact of this disastrous news were not calamitous enough, in itself, in the eyes of her grand-parents,

the unwelcome young lady actually arrived, almost as soon as the disquieting notice !

Ion chanced to be present at the moment of Leonora's arrival, and was shocked and disgusted at the poor child's reception ; for Lord and Lady Glenalmond were at no pains to conceal their contemptuous aggravation, when the girl, (not being versed in the 'repose which stamps the caste of Vere de Vere,' and further, feeling hungry, —tired from the long and hurried journey, —and grieved to the heart at the loss of the kind lady who for so many years had been her teacher, friend, and almost mother,) sank weeping upon a chair, and then anxiously,—inquiringly,—looked round to see what manner of people

her relations must be to receive her thus coldly.

She was quite old enough now, to resent the neglect of the last ten years; and when the realisation of it was forced upon her by the contrast between the grandeur of Falcon's Rest and its establishment, and the niggardly,—often disputed,—and openly grudged payments, which arrived quarterly at Versailles for her 'board and keep,' she felt bitterly indignant, and angry with herself for betraying any emotion; so, quickly gulping down her sobs, she rose proudly from her seat, and, without vouchsafing a word to her grand-parents, exclaimed, (addressing no one in particular:)

'So this is Falcon's Rest! One would

hardly believe, from my reception, that I was one of the brood.' Then, motioning haughtily to a domestic to show her her apartments, she flounced from the room, looking alarmingly ferocious. But, as soon as she was alone, she again broke down, and, shedding bitter tears, vowed (for she had a high spirit, albeit a tender one) to 'hold her own, by fair means or by foul.'

She became softened, however, in a few minutes; for as she lay sobbing dismally, with her head buried in the pillows of her strange bed, she felt an arm thrown round her, and heard caressing whispers in her ear, and, on looking up, she saw her young uncle Ion Ramsay by her side. He had

followed her to her room, and soon soothed the angry girl's outraged feelings by assuring her that in him and his Olive she would find two staunch and sympathising friends.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

127 est

3000

300

300
200

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS-URBANA



3 0112 052943864